

HINTS ON
PREACHING

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Hints on preaching

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HINTS ON PREACHING:

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

The Pulpit, in the sober use
Of its legitimate, peculiar pow'rs,
Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of Virtue's cause.

COWPER.

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PREFACE.

THIS little book is only what its title indicates,—a book of “hints on preaching.” But on matters here set forth, many may pause to take a hint and profit by it, who have no time for extended reading and patient reflection. These hints are mostly from acknowledged high sources, and may be regarded, in the words of Cervantes, as “short sentences drawn from a long experience.” They are the abridgments of wisdom. In very many cases, they are the central ideas which their authors have elaborated into chapters.

For wider reading, the “Yale Lectures” by Beecher, Taylor, Hall, Dale, Brooks, and Bishop Simpson, are fresh and to the point. The treatises by Claude, Vinet, Theremin, Porter, Ripley, Holyoake, Spurgeon, Shedd, Hoppin, Dabney, and Broadus, are standards. Fenelon’s “Dialogues on Eloquence” are full of intelligence and spirit. Bautain, Ware and Storrs have written wisely of extempore preaching. But Quintilian is the teacher of the teachers. He wrote of this great art of speaking in the interest of lawyers, but clergymen may read between the lines a meaning of vast importance to themselves.

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HINTS ON PREACHING.

I.

ELOQUENCE.

Many are the friends of the golden tongue.—*Welsh Proverb.*

Eloquence is speaking in such a manner as to attain the end for which we speak.—*Dr. Blair.*

Eloquence has been well defined as truth clearly perceived, deeply felt, and distinctly expressed.—*E. P. Hood.*

The eloquent man is he who is no beautiful speaker, but who is inwardly drunk with a certain belief.—*R. W. Emerson.*

It is of eloquence as of a flame: it requires matter to feed it, motion to excite it, and it brightens as it burns.—*Tacitus.*

The office and duty of eloquence (if a man well weigh the matter) is no other than to apply and command the dictates of reason to the imagination, for the better moving of the appetite and will.—*Lord Bacon.*

To feel one's subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence.—*Oliver Goldsmith.*

Eloquence is the language of nature, and cannot be learnt in the schools; the passions are powerful pleaders, and their very silence, like that of Garrick, goes directly to the soul; but rhetoric is the creature of art, which

he who feels least will most excel in; it is the quackery of eloquence, and deals in nostrums, not in cures.—*Colton*.

We may therefore consider it as a capital maxim, that the eloquent speaker we are inquiring after cannot be formed without the assistance of philosophy. I do not mean that this alone is sufficient, but only that it will contribute to improve him in the same manner as the palæstra does an actor.—*Cicero*.

Eloquence must be grounded on the plainest narrative. Afterward it may warm itself until it exhales symbols of every kind and color, speaks only through the most poetic forms; but, first and last, it must still be at bottom a biblical statement of fact. The orator is thereby an orator, that he keeps his feet ever on a fact. Thus only is he invincible.—*R. W. Emerson*.

He attends much more to things than to words. We forget the orator and think of the business. He warms the mind and impels to action. He has no parade and ostentation; no methods of insinuation; no labored introductions; but is like a man full of his subject, who, after preparing his audience by a sentence or two for hearing plain truths, enters directly on business.—*Dr. Blair on the style of Demosthenes*.

The foundation of all that can be called eloquent is good sense and solid thought. Let it be the first study of public speakers, in addressing any popular assembly, to be previously masters of the business on which they are to speak; to be well provided with matter and argument; and to rest upon these the chief stress. This will always give to their discourse an air of manliness and strength, which is a powerful argument of persuasion. Ornament, if they have genius for it, will follow of course.—*Dr. Blair*.

There are two kinds of orators, the distinction between

whom might be thus illustrated. When the moon shines brightly we are apt to say, "How beautiful is this moonlight!" but in the daytime, "How beautiful are the trees, the fields, the mountains!"—and, in short, all the objects that are illuminated; we never speak of the sun that makes them so. Just in the same way, the really greatest orator shines like the sun, making you think much of the things he is speaking of; the second best shines like the moon, making you think much of him and his eloquence.—*Archbishop Whately.*

True eloquence I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others,—when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.—*Milton.*

Of what kinds of discourse do we predicate eloquence? What gives to a passage that mysterious power by which it fastens a spell upon our hearts? In what part of a discourse do we expect to find it? Rarely in the introduction; not often in simple narration; never in appeals to pure reason. To be eloquent, a passage must speak to the imagination and the passions. It must emanate from a mind that feels deeply and conceives vividly, and must be clothed in language which paints rather than describes; causing the distant to become near, and the absent or invisible to start up before us with a living power.—*A. Potter.*

The right eloquence needs no bell to call the people together, and no constable to keep them. It draws the children from their play, the old from their arm-chairs, the invalid from his warm chamber; it holds the hearer fast; steals away his feet, that he shall not depart,—his

memory, that he shall not remember the most pressing affairs,—his belief, that he shall not admit any opposing considerations.—*R. W. Emerson.*

Plato says that a discourse is eloquent only as it produces an effect in the soul of the hearer; and by this rule, therefore, you may form a certain and correct estimate of every discourse you hear. Every discourse which leaves you as cold as it finds you, which merely amuses the intellect, which excites no emotion in your heart, however beautiful it may seem, is not eloquent. Cicero also expresses himself exactly in the same manner as Plato on this point. He says, that every word the speaker utters ought to have for its object to touch those hidden springs of action which nature has placed in the heart of man. You have only, then, to consult your own breast, to know whether the speakers you hear do well or not. If they make a lively impression upon you; if they awaken your attention, and excite your interest; if they warm your heart, and lift you above yourself; rest assured they have attained the end of eloquence. But if, instead of producing tender emotions within you, or inspiring you with strong feelings, they only please you, and compel you to admire the brilliancy and justness of their thoughts and expressions, why then you may say they are mere pretenders.—*Fenelon.*

II.

HEALTH.

What is written in weariness is delivered and heard with weariness.—*J. W. Alexander.*

A sound mind in a sound body, if the former be the glory of the latter, the latter is indispensable to the former.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

A good pulpit perspiration is a famous thing to keep a man in good health.—*Rowland Hill*.

Sickness is poor-spirited, and cannot serve any one; it must husband its resources to live. But health or fullness answers its own ends, and has to spare, runs over, and inundates the neighborhoods and creeks of other men's necessities.—*R. W. Emerson*.

The ideal preacher brings the perfectly healthy body with the perfectly sound soul. Remember that the care for your health, the avoidance of nervous waste, the training of your voice, and everything else that you do for your body is not merely an economy of your organs that they may be fit for certain works; it is a part of that total self-consecration which cannot be divided, and which all together makes you the medium through which God may reach His children's lives.—*Phillips Brooks*.

The power of rapidly originating thought, and as rapidly combining it in relations with others,—the power of expressing it freely and with facility, and so of setting forth the subjects which are treated in energetic and perspicuous speech: these are the powers which the preacher requires, if he is to speak without aid from his notes. And these are the powers which depend most eminently on fulness of health as their condition.—*R. S. Storrs*.

The sedentary life of the student and the preacher subjects them to weakness of body and languor of spirits, and predisposes them to feebleness in voice and action. They need double care and diligence for the preservation of that healthy tone of feeling which alone can insure energy of habit in expressive utterance.—*William Russell*.

Perhaps the lowest quality of the art of oratory, but one on many occasions of the first importance, is a certain robust and radiant physical health; great volumes of ani-

mal heat. In the cold thinness of a morning audience, mere energy and mellowness is inestimable; wisdom and learning would be harsh and unwelcome compared with a substantial man, who is quite a house-warming.—*Holyoake.*

The body requires to be prepared in a certain manner before an harangue. It should be subjected to a sort of magnetism, as the phrase runs in these days; and the orator who knows the difficulties and the resources of his art will take very good care not to undertake a speech, unless he is compelled by circumstances to do so, without making his arrangements in this respect too.—*M. Bautain.*

First, write all your sermons in a close, confined hand, which may be difficult to read. Secondly, place them on a pulpit so that you will be obliged to incline the face toward the manuscript, and to keep one finger following the lines, lest you lose the place. Then with the other hand attempt to gesticulate, keeping the eye on the page all the while; and, my word for it, you will have a first-rate case of clerical bronchitis in less than six months.—*Bishop Simpson.*

A man in bad health will show it in his voice, in its feebleness or harshness; for in ill health, the muscular system, upon which the voice depends, is relaxed; and a man with a cracked voice is little better than a cracked bell or a cracked musical instrument. The preacher should strive to maintain a good, vigorous tone of health, for the purpose of maintaining a good vocal tone. He should regard his body as an instrument in God's hands to proclaim his word; it should be kept strong and pure, as the medium of divine inspiration and instruction.—*J. M. Hoppin.*

III.

CHARACTER.

First be trimmed thyself, and then adorn thy brother.—*The Rabbins.*

The hand, that means to make another clean, must not itself be dirty.—*Gregory.*

You are not only to shine as a lamp in the sanctuary, but to aim that your heart be an altar where the celestial fire is burning.—*E. Grindrod.*

It would be wholly monstrous, for a man to be highest in office and lowest in soul; first in station and last in life.—*Bernard.*

He who will train himself to mastery in this science of persuasion must lay the emphasis of education, not on popular arts, but on character and insight.—*R. W. Emerson.*

A cloud, though to appearance very pregnant and full of rain, if it brings with it overmuch wind, seldom affords much rain to the dry and thirsty earth; which very thing the Holy Ghost is pleased several times to make use of to represent a great show of religion with the mouth, without answerable fruit in the life.—*Jonathan Edwards.*

A minister of evil life cannot preach with that fervour and efficacy, with that life and spirit, as a good man does. For, besides that he does not himself understand the secrets of religion, and the private inducements of the spirit, and the sweetness of internal joy, and the inexpressible advantages of holy peace,—besides all this, he cannot heartily speak all he knows. He hath a clog at his foot, and a gag in his teeth. There is a fear, and there is a shame, and there is a guilt, and a secret willingness that

the thing were not true, and some little private arts, to lessen his own consent, and to take off the asperities and consequent trouble of a clear conviction.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

To know in one's whole nature what it is to live by Christ; to be His, not our own; to be so occupied with gratitude for what He did for us and for what He continually is to us that His will and His glory shall be the sole desires of our life,—I wish that I could put in some words of new and overwhelming force the old accepted certainty that that is the first necessity of the preacher, that to preach without that is weary and unsatisfying and unprofitable work, that to preach with that is a perpetual privilege and joy.—*Phillips Brooks.*

Take heed to yourselves lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim the necessity of a Savior to the world, your hearts should neglect him, and you should miss of an interest in him and his saving benefits.—*Richard Baxter.*

When a preacher of righteousness has stood in the way of sinners, he should never again open his lips in the great congregation until his repentance is as notorious as his sin.—*John Angell James.*

We must first be pure, and then purify others; be taught, then teach others; become light, and then enlighten others; draw near to God ourselves, and then induce others to approach him; sanctify ourselves, and then make others holy.—*Gregory of Nazianzen.*

Take heed to your conduct, because the success of all your labors does very much depend upon it. If you unsay by your lives, what you say with your lips, you will prove the greatest hinderers of your own work. It greatly prevents our success, that other men are all the week con-

tradicting to the people in private, what we have been speaking to them from the word of God, in public; but it will prevent it much more, if we contradict ourselves, if our actions give our words the lie. This is the way to make men think that the word of God is but an idle tale. Surely he that means as he speaks, will do as he speaks. One improper word, one unbecoming action, may blast the fruit of many a sermon.—*Richard Baxter.*

The parson's yea is yea, and nay, nay; and his apparel plain, but reverend, and clean, without spots, or dust, or smell; the purity of his mind breaking out and dilating itself even to his body, clothes and habitation.—*George Herbert.*

IV.

SYMPATHY WITH THE PEOPLE.

And Jesus saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them.—*Matthew.*

We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.—*St. Paul.*

A warm desire of procuring the good of those who hear us, is a most infallible means of engaging them.—*Abbé Basplas.*

The Democracy must be reached—people must be made to feel that the heart of the minister is with them. Common people require this. Age requires it. Young men require it.—*J. W. Alexander.*

No one knows what a smile and a hearty sentence may

do. A man who is to do much with men must love them, and feel at home with them. An individual who has no geniality about him had better be an undertaker, and bury the dead, for he will never succeed in influencing the living.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

A melancholy, morose, misanthropic person, who shuns society, dreads the intercourse of men, and delights in solitary musing, will have a difficulty in speaking in public; he has not the taste for it, and his nature is against it. What is needed for this art, with a quick mind, is an open, confiding, and cheerful character, which loves men and takes pleasure in joining itself to others. Mistrust shuts the heart, the mind and the mouth.—*M. Bautain.*

To address men well, they must be loved much. Whatever they may be, be they never so guilty, or indifferent, or ungrateful, or however deeply sunk in crime, before all and above all, they must be loved. Love is the sap of the gospel, the secret of lively and effectual preaching, the magic power of eloquence. The end of preaching is to reclaim the hearts of men to God, and nothing but love can find out the mysterious avenues which lead to the heart. We are always eloquent when we wish to save one whom we love; we are always listened to when we are loved.—*Abbé Myllois.*

Many a time the tone of a clergyman who has talked of the relations of the preacher and the people, setting forth, with the best will in the world, their mutual functions, reminds one of the sermon of the mediæval preacher, who, discoursing on this same subject, on the necessary coöperation of the clergy and the laity, took his text out of Job i, 14: "The oxen were ploughing and the asses feeding beside them." There is no good preaching in the supercilious preacher. No man preaches well who has not a strong and deep appreciation of humanity.—*Phillips Brooks.*

The more pains an haranguer takes to dazzle me by the artifices of his discourse, the more I despise his vanity. I love a serious preacher who speaks for my sake, not his own; who seeks my salvation, not his own vain-glory.—*Archbishop of Cambray.*

The true evangelical fervor comes with affectionate interest in personal souls.—*R. S. Storrs.*

Charity is the supreme law of Christian rhetoric as well as of the Christian life.—*R. W. Dale.*

The wish to speak to the want of another mind assists to clear your own.—*R. W. Emerson.*

The injustice and unreason which we have had to encounter, have made us somewhat querulous, and we have become champions when we should have remained fathers and pastors. We have followed the world too much into the arena of discussion. We have fancied that it was enough to prove a truth in order to secure its adoption into the habits of life. We have forgotten that St. Francis de Sales converted 70,000 Protestants by the sweetness of his charity, and not one by argument. Nevertheless, strange enough, much is urged on the young clergyman as regards the necessity and mode of proving a truth and of constructing a sermon, but scarcely anything on the necessity and manner of loving his audience.—*Abbé Mullois.*

When I am in the pulpit, I regard neither doctors nor magistrates, of whom about forty are in the church; but I have an eye to the multitudes of young people, children, and servants, of whom there are about two thousand.—*Martin Luther.*

The speaker who attempts to conciliate and capture his audience by a frequent use of the phrases, My beloved friends! My cherished hearers! My dear brethren! will

only disgust. The love that will win and bring hearts into the best relation with the orator, is that which shows itself in deeds, and not in words. It will appear in the choice of the theme, and in the toil that is put into its treatment to render it of service. It will show itself in the humanity of the preacher's thought and discussion, and will need no bell to notify of its presence. The more it is hidden the more it will appear, and the less its avowal the greater its sway.—*Lisle*.

Not having in his heart a love for the people, how liable is the preacher to treat topics that only interest himself, and that help no one! He will spin like a top about his own little center, and the people will have to endure his self-diversion. If their case is not as bad as was that of the congregation to which a heartless priest gave twenty sermons on "Joseph's Coat," they will still have to abide the doling out of much that looks not to their good. They will be like those hapless sheep which the shepherd leads apart from the green pastures and the still waters, on some cruise in which his own heart is enlisted. It might not be amiss that the people should give to such clergymen their topics; that they should meet and declare for the themes they need to listen to. In that case many a subject would be debarred that is now brought forward. The people would refuse to hear about the little whims and passing conceits that loom up in the minister's firmament in unlucky moments, and that so often turn the sermon into a trivial piece of clerical diversion, like displacing the church organ with a jews-harp. A right love will remedy this evil. It will see the needs of the people, and feel for them, and will come to the pulpit solely in their interest, bringing solid and helpful themes. "I make my sermons," said Fenelon, "as a servant of humanity."—*Lisle*.

V.

PRAYER.

It is incredible how much light, how much vigor, how much force and vitality are imparted to the clergyman by deep, earnest supplication.—*Erasmus*.

No man can be a great preacher without great feeling. Hence the value of devotional preparation.—*J. W. Alexander*.

Let our Christian orator, who would be understood and heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God before he pronounce anything.—*Augustine*.

Your prayers will be your ablest assistants while your discourses are yet upon the anvil. While other men, like Esau, are hunting for their portion, you, by the aid of prayer, will find the savory meat near at home, and may say in truth what Jacob said so falsely, "The Lord brought it to me." If you can dip your pens into your hearts, appealing in earnestness to the Lord, you will write well; and if you can gather your matter on your knees at the gate of heaven, you will not fail to speak well.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

When you are to preach you should go directly from your knees in your study to the pulpit.—*Cotton Mather*.

Prayer will singularly assist you in the delivery of your sermon; in fact, nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

A prayer should have a plan, as much as a sermon. In the recoil from the formalism of written and read prayers, Protestants have not paid sufficient attention to an orderly and symmetrical structure in public supplications. Extemporaneous prayer, like extemporaneous preaching, is too often the product of the single instant, instead of devout reflection and premeditation.—*W. G. Shedd.*

As a rule, if called upon to preach, conduct the prayer yourself; and if you should be highly esteemed in the ministry, as I trust you may be, make a point, with great courtesy, but equal firmness, to resist the practice of choosing men to pray with the idea of honoring them by giving them something to do.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

If you are in the spirit of prayer, do not be long, because other people will not be able to keep pace with you in such unusual spirituality; and if you are not in the spirit of prayer, do not be long, because you will then be sure to weary the listeners.—*John Macdonald.*

He prayed me into a good frame of mind, and if he had stopped there it would have been very well, but he prayed me out of it again by keeping on.—*George Whitfield.*

Begin the work of making a sermon with a solemn address to God. — This will lay you in the way of His blessing and assistance; and will naturally have some good influence to awaken, compose and encourage your soul; — it will direct your minds to right ends and views, — which is a matter of vast importance. Thus might you pray: May my heart be inflamed with pious affections; that divine truths coming warm from my own soul may more easily penetrate into the souls of my hearers: May I remember that I am not to compose an harangue to acquire to myself the reputation of an eloquent orator; but that I

am preparing food for precious and immortal souls; and dispensing that sacred gospel which my Redeemer brought from heaven, and sealed with his blood. May I therefore sincerely endeavour to give my discourse the most useful turn, and do thou direct me so to form it, as best to promote the great purpose of christian edification.—*Philip Doddridge.*

The liability to sameness in extempore prayers falls rather at the beginning than farther on, when the spirit has kindled. Hence it will be well for the preacher to map out on Sunday morning some new path of entrance into this part of his service. There are many avenues to the divine presence, and fitness requires that we shall not always take the same one and neglect the others. The changing of a word or two in the sentences of ascription is not what is here meant. It is rather in the opening thought of the prayer that the freshness is to be sought. A new idea alone will serve. The topic of the sermon will frequently furnish this; and sometimes much of the prayer may stand in remote relations with the discourse, being suggested by it. The thought and spirit of some previous sermon may be revived to give a fit introduction. The prayer-books will furnish both suggestion and inspiration wherewith to secure freshness, and pass one beyond the usual moment of constraint into the after freedom. The Psalms and the Gospels supply many keys to open the door into the realm of devotion. But the best safeguard against the stale and stereotyped introduction to the pulpit prayer, is a soul already kindled by the length and strength of its closet communions, and that goes to the temple, not to introduce itself to God, but as one already in the midst of its spiritual interview with him, alive to his presence, rejoicing in his mercies, and hopeful of his continued grace.—*Lisle.*

VI.

SPECIFIC PURPOSE.

It is absolutely necessary that a discourse should state something, and prove it.—*Aristotle*.

We shall preach to no purpose unless we have a purpose in preaching. Archbishop Whately said of some preacher that "he aimed at nothing, and hit it."—*R. W. Dale*.

Never confine yourselves to the contemplation of themes. Make themes your means for reaching persons; and give the mind force by giving it concentration.—*R. S. Storrs*.

The constant design of both these orators (Demosthenes and Cicero) in all their speeches was to drive some one particular point.—*Dean Swift*.

Whether you announce or do not announce your design beforehand, you have always a proposition to establish, a conviction to produce in the souls of your hearers.—*Vinet*.

When I have a subject before me, I sometimes ask myself three questions: What is it? On what evidence does it rest? and, What does it concern me, or any of my people, if it be true?—*Andrew Fuller*.

The ends of speaking are reducible to four, every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, to influence the will.—*Cicero*.

It is a favorite method with me to reduce the text to some point of doctrine. On that topic I enlarge, and then

apply it. I like to ask myself, What are you doing? What is your aim?—*Cecil*.

The wise preacher will propose to himself some chief effect which he hopes to produce by every discourse. This is a distinct thing from the subject of discourse.—*E. Porter*.

As soon as you give one a purpose to be accomplished, things will fall into their places; extraneous things will be instinctively, and of course, ruled out; there will be motion and current to his speech.—*R. S. Storrs*.

The speaker must first have one main subject of discourse, to which he adheres with supreme reference throughout. But this is not enough. He must second, propose to himself one definite impression on the hearer's soul, to the making of which everything in the sermon is bent.—*R. L. Dabney*.

There is a difference between the subject of a discourse and its object; the latter is the motive that impels us to speak, while the former is what we speak about. It is not uncommon for ministers to have a subject without any very distinct object. Their engagements require them to speak, and a subject is a necessity. That which can be treated most easily is taken, and all the ideas they possess, or can collect about it, are given forth, and the matter left. Until such persons grow in earnest, and really desire to accomplish something, they cannot advance the cause of God.—*Wm. Pittenger*.

As you sit down to prepare your discourse, let your question be, What is my purpose in this sermon? And do not move a step until you have shaped out before your mind a definite answer to that inquiry. This will save you from that vagueness which chloroforms so many sermons and sends so many hearers to sleep. Set up your goal, and keep it always in sight, so every step you take

will bring you nearer to its attainment, and your audience will be at no loss to see what you are driving at. The way to walk in a straight line over a trackless field, is to fix the eye, and keep it fixed, on some object that is stationary and sufficiently elevated, and then to move toward that; and the great preventive of diffuseness and digression in discourse is to have, high above all other things in your mind, the perception of the purpose which your sermon is designed to fulfill.—*Wm. M. Taylor.*

The minister should be actuated by a noble purpose. If he has a clear aim before him, it will tend powerfully to give unity and consistency to his discourse, and prevent him from falling into endless digressions. It will bind all detached parts together, and infuse a common life through the whole mass. We cannot be too careful in the selection of such a ruling object, for it will affect the whole superstructure.—*Wm. Pittenger.*

The more special the subject, the more you will find to say on it. Boys think just the reverse; they write of Virtue, Honour, Liberty, etc. It would be easier to write on the pleasures of Virtue, the Honour of knighthood, or the difference between true and false Liberty; which are more special. Take it as a general rule, the more you narrow the subject, the more thoughts you will have.—*J. W. Alexander.*

You will do well to give a title to your sermon—a title which shall designate the subject. By which means you will be obliged to determine in your mind what the subject precisely is, and also will be furnished with a rule which will keep you closely to it.—*W. Gresley.*

It is characteristic of a discourse that it is full of unity. It begins and it ends in unity. Unity presides over its origin, its movement, and its aim. It comes forth from one thought, one proposition, and it goes

right on to the attainment of one object,—the production of action. At every point of the development this end is in view, causing all the material to fall into proper order, and making it all converge to the one result.—*F. W. Fisk.*

It might be of use if in the composition of sermons we were to oblige ourselves to give titles to them. Many of what are called sermons would be found to require three or four titles, to answer to their contents; which at once proves that, properly speaking, they are not sermons.—*Andrew Fuller.*

You must decide with the utmost clearness what it is you are going to speak upon. Many orators are too vague in this, and it is an original vice which makes itself felt in their whole labor, and, later, in their audience. Nothing is worse than vagueness in a discourse; it produces obscurity, diffuseness, rigmarole, and wearisomeness. The hearer does not cling to a speaker who talks without knowing what he would say, and who, undertaking to guide him, seems to be ignorant whither he is going.—*M. Bautain.*

Ninety-nine in every hundred who inquire about the sermon they did not hear will ask: "What was its subject?" while only one will ask: "What was its object?" And yet the *aim* of the sermon is that which should be most regarded, as the use of an instrument is that which should give it its value in the eyes of all. A pretty device that has no reference to some useful end is of little worth. Even poetry, the most privileged order of literature in this particular, must tell on some higher interest of humanity than a passing delight; and the pulpit is wholly at fault that looks not beyond the filling of a half-hour with intellectual interest in a theme. Here the subject must always be treated in view of an object. Themes are not final, but instrumental. "To

what *end* am I about to discuss this topic?" should be the self-searching question with which every minister should come to the task of preparing his discourse; and if he finds in his heart no distinct response, let him set about discovering one, that his conscience may stand void of offense, and his mind and heart acquire direction and impulse. As the racer runs for a goal, and the sailor sails for a port, and the lawyer pleads for a verdict, let the preacher preach for some Christian result that shall inspire and justify his toil.—*Lisle*.

VII.

GREAT SUBJECTS.

To divide a sermon well may be a very useful art, but how if there is nothing to divide.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

A theme which has no relation to a subject practically important, or which cannot be made so, without painful effort, is not a proper basis for an oratorical discourse.—*Schott*.

In speaking, the same thing happens which may be discovered in most of the other surprising operations of nature, that the subjects which are of the greatest utility contain the greatest dignity and often the greatest beauty.—*Cicero*.

That is not useful preaching which is a mere collection of good remarks, without the scope, connection and impression which belong to a regular discourse. Nor is that a profitable sermon which now and then startles the hearers with a vivid flash of thought, or makes them remember a few eccentric phrases;—but that which fixes their eye on a single great subject; which holds their at-

tention steadily to that subject; which gives them, as they go on, a clearer perception and a deeper feeling of that subject; and finally compels them to remember that subject, though they cannot repeat one expression uttered by the preacher.—*Dr. Porter.*

Avoid all diminutive themes—such as may be discussed and settled in a few sentences; for if you try to make a whole sermon on one of these, you will be tempted to fill up the time with vapid declamation, and will continue to spin away with the wheel of verbal fluency long after the “tow” of thought has been exhausted. That was a wise advice of Dr. James W. Alexander, “Preach on great subjects.” There is something in them to inspire the preacher and to subdue and impress the hearer. Leave the lesser topics for minor occasions—such as the chair of the prayer-meeting or the table of the lecture-room will supply. But let your sermons be elevated in their subjects, and they will be elevating in their influence.—*Wm. M. Taylor.*

Let me say one thing about this conception of preaching as the telling of a message which constantly impresses me. I think that it would give to our preaching just the quality which it appears to me to most lack now. That quality is breadth. I do not mean liberality of thought, not tolerance of opinion, nor anything of that kind. I mean largeness of movement, the great utterance of great truths, the great enforcement of great duties, as distinct from the minute, and subtle, and ingenious treatment of little topics, side issues of the soul's life, bits of anatomy, the bric-à-brac of theology. Take up, some Saturday, the list of subjects on which the ministers of a great city are to preach the next day. See how many of them seem to have searched in strange corners of the Bible for their topics, how small and fantastic is the bit of truth which their hearers are to have set before them.

Then turn to Barrow, or Tillotson, or Bushnell—"Of being imitators of Christ;" "That God is the only happiness of man;" "Every man's life a plan of God." There is a painting of ivory miniatures, and there is a painting of great frescoes.—*Phillips Brooks*.

That subject is great, in a homiletical sense, which it greatly concerns the people to understand and take to heart. Its greatness lies in the measure of its usefulness. The subjects of this order are, in the main, such as christians are most agreed upon, and that need not so much to be debated as earnestly declared. In the words of Baxter: "The plainest and most commonly acknowledged truths are what men most live upon; these are the great instruments in destroying sin, and in lifting the soul to God." The simple gospel principles should form the staple of preaching; for it is on these that souls will grow great and beautiful and gentle and heavenly.—*Lisle*.

VIII.

POSITIVENESS.

Give me your certainties; I have doubts enough of my own.—*Goethe*.

He unsettles everything and settles nothing.—*Dr. Johnson on Dr. Priestley*.

The accent of true authority is welcome to almost every one. We are prepossessed in favor of men who, in this world of uncertainty and perplexity, express themselves on a grave subject with confidence and command.—*Vinet*.

The people like a strong, self-reliant and fearless affirmative, declared boldly and sincerely in the name of God,

which admits of no *buts* or *ifs*, but which descends from on high, claiming the ready assent of all, without distinction.—*Abbé Mullois*.

As a man must love art, and music, because they address themselves to his constitution, so must he love religion if it be presented to him in its positive and self-evidencing elements. Even the atheist, who assumes that the spiritual realm is a fiction, cannot succeed in crowding it out of his thoughts, but comes round to it with a singular frequency, as if his instinct were so strong he could not hold it down; or, rather, as if in the midst of his mental denials his soul caught views of the ever precious affirmations — God, the soul, and immortality. Hence that must be the best preaching that sets before man the principles that appeal to the soul as light to the eye and love to the heart.—*Lisle*.

Beware of the tendency to preach about Christianity, and try to preach Christ. To discuss the relations of Christianity and Science, Christianity and Society, Christianity and Politics, is good. To set Christ forth to men so that they shall know Him, and in gratitude and love become His, that is far better. It is good to be a Herschel who describes the sun; but it is better to be a Prometheus who brings the sun's fire to the earth.—*Phillips Brooks*.

Those religious teachers will always command most confidence who dare most to speak in positive tones. Assertions hesitatingly expressed, or qualified with modest reserve, may suit the lecture-room or the study; but they are out of place in the pulpit. An eager, heavy-laden soul crying out from its heart, "What must I do to be saved?" will listen only to a preacher who shows that he believes himself with all his energy in the answer which he gives. It is no secret that of late years Protestant divines have spoken with less boldness, with less clearness and confidence than their predecessors of the last generation.—*J. A. Froude*.

Some ministers preach the truth as a donkey mumbles a thistle — very cautiously.—*Rowland Hill.*

It is well to deny errors; it is better to affirm truths. But it is worst of all to foster a general distrust of all conclusions, so that a congregation will only know that it don't know, and only believe that there is nothing to be believed. This state of mental uncertainty will soon lead to the questioning of moral verdicts. Hence that ministry is of more than doubtful utility that does not deal mainly with the things it can heartily affirm, and employ to the bracing and establishment of faith among the people. If a man has no positive message he is no minister; and he is the best minister who rarely, if ever, comes to the pulpit except to unfold and urge, in full faith, some one or other of the great affirmations of religion.—*Lisle.*

IX.

EARNESTNESS.

His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.—*Jeremiah.*

It is more by the Christian fervor of his sermons than by any endowment of his intellect that the minister must hope to inform the understanding, reach the affections, and bend the will of his hearers.—*St. Augustine.*

Be assured that genuine enthusiasm is no other than reason warmed by the voice of the passions, and that eloquence is not a delirium.—*Abbé Maury.*

Romaine used to say it was well to understand the art of preaching, but infinitely better to know the *heart* of preaching; and in that saying there is no little weight.

The heart of preaching, the throwing of the soul into it, the earnestness which pleads as for life itself, is half the battle as to gaining attention.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Our animation must be the earnestness, not of rhetoric, but of religion; not of art, but of renewed nature; and not designed to astound, but to move; not the manner studied and intended merely to attract a crowd and to excite applause, but to save the souls of men.—*John Angell James.*

It is in the purpose first and always that the earnestness must live. It is not a manner which can be put on from without, but an influence, say, rather, an effluence, which must emanate from within. It cannot be acquired by any practice, or successfully imitated from any model. Neither can it be simulated by any process. It is part of the man. It springs out of an unwavering conviction of the truth of that which we are at the moment preaching, and of the fact that just that truth needs to be spoken to our hearers.—*William M. Taylor.*

Almost every man in passion is eloquent. Then he is at no loss for words and arguments. He transmits to others, by a sort of contagious sympathy, the warm sentiments which he feels; his looks and gestures are all persuasive; and nature here shows herself infinitely more powerful than all art.—*Dr. Blair.*

The principal lack in the current preaching is not so much in the matter as in the manner. There is truth sufficient to save the soul in most of the sermons that are delivered; but it is not so fused with the speaker's personal convictions, and presented in such living contact with the hearers' fears, hopes, and needs, as to make the impression of stern reality.—*W. G. Shedd.*

In the choice of subjects, let the preacher never encumber himself, nor distress his hearers, with the attempt

to interest them in a subject which excites at the moment only a feeble interest in his own mind. Let him also use every means,—by careful meditation, by calling up the strong motives of his office, by realizing the nature and responsibility of his undertaking, and by earnestly invoking the blessing of God,—to attain that frame of devout engagedness which will dispose him to speak zealously and fearlessly.—*S. T. Sturtevant.*

A due fervor makes a plain discourse more touching than one more exquisitely composed and coldly delivered, as a blunt iron when red-hot will pierce deeper into a piece of wood than a much sharper one that is cold.—*Bates.*

The earnestness that should most concern the preacher is that which is born of character and devotion to his calling; but there is a special fervor to be kindled as a preparation for the delivery of each sermon. To draw on this temporary heat will be an easy task for such whose hearts do quickly respond to the means of excitation; but the slow and heavy will need to toil longer and harder to bring a fit degree of warmth in which to ascend the pulpit, and these may be tempted to avoid the task by reason of the demand it makes. No one may hope to devise an art of kindling the soul to order that will serve on all occasions, or with equal success with all persons; and it is probably best that each preacher should make discovery of an art for himself, and yet, on general grounds, a few hints may not come amiss. As the athlete dare not come to the arena unprepared, so let the preacher fear to undertake his sacred task in a sluggish or frivolous frame of mind. The Sunday morning should be devoted to tuning the heart and marshalling the forces that are to be engaged in the pulpit. Let him seek solitude and its high offices; let him muse till the fire burns; let him set himself amid those

currents of spiritual influences that never sweep over the soul except to freshen and invigorate; let him pray long and earnestly in his closet that he may pray and preach in the power of the spirit in his pulpit; let him turn his heart toward the people and reflect on his message in the light of their well-being, for an affectionate desire to do souls good is one of the great secrets of earnest preaching; let him renounce self for the sake of his cause, for zeal and energy come with devotion to the gospel; let him give drift to his powers by setting them in vital contact with the special purpose of his sermon, for he who means to carry a point is no longer an idler but alive to his task; let him go to the church in silence, if he can, still busy with the last offices of preparation, and let him reach his pulpit with as little interruption as possible in vestibule and vestry.—*Lisle*.

X.

VOICE.

Everywhere else men speak; they speak at the bar and the tribune; but they no longer speak in the pulpit, for there we only meet with a factitious and artificial language, and a false tone.—*Abbé Mullois*.

Care should be taken that the pitch is as near as possible that of the ordinary tone of conversation. This is essential to prevent injury to the vocal organs, and that monotonous utterance which becomes very unpleasant to the listeners.—*Bishop Simpson*.

The kind of voice adapted to the exercise and business of public speaking is not the voice of ordinary conversation. It is a larger utterance. The sound originates

deeper, possesses more swell, is longer drawn out, flies to a greater distance.—*M. Bautain.*

What the voice requires is expansion—a setting it free from the narrow modes of action, of conversation and business. We do not now refer to depth proper, which relates to the scale, and is expressed by up and down, high and low; but the meaning is that whether the pitch be high or low, a fuller, broader sound—more volume—is, generally, the requirement of the unexercised voice. Breadth is precisely the property we refer to as that which is usually wanting, and to its attainment the first efforts should be addressed.—*M. Bautain.*

If a preacher's voice is naturally weak, it is a good plan to address himself to the part of the congregation farthest from him; a method which is found to have the effect of throwing out the sound without any unpleasant exertion or straining.—*W. Gresley.*

Begin softly. Use no more voice at first than is necessary to be audible to the rear benches. Appropriateness usually requires this, because the thoughts and sentiments of the introductory passages are usually calm. Movement demands it; for if you begin at your loudest, there is then no louder voice to be employed as you approach your climax. Especially does the economy of your own health and strength exact this policy; for a sudden and powerful exertion of the voice at once roughens it, irritates the larynx, and induces a hoarseness equally distressing to hearer and speaker. But if the organs are warmed to their work gradually until the circulation of the blood is quickened, the secretion of the natural lubricating fluids stimulated, and the whole body nerved by mental excitement, then the force may be gradually increased, and powerful and protracted exertions made with marvellous impunity.—*R. L. Dabney.*

From what was stated respecting the physiology of the

vocal chords, it will be evident that continued speaking in one tone is much more fatiguing than frequent alterations in the pitch of the voice; because by the former, one muscle or set of muscles alone is strained, while by the latter, different muscles are brought into action, and thus relieve one another. In the same way, a man raising his arm at right angles to his body becomes fatigued in five or ten minutes, because only one set of muscles has to bear the weight; but these same muscles can work the whole day if their action is alternated with that of others. Whenever, therefore, we hear a clergyman droning through the church service, and in the same manner and tone of voice reading, praying and exhorting, we may be perfectly sure that he is giving ten times more labor to his vocal chords than is absolutely necessary.—*Samuel Fenwick.*

I wish to utter my protest against declaiming aloud in solitude the discourse to be delivered. My objection is that the process is unavoidably artificial; the audience is not present, and the author has not the unaffected emotion which he will feel, if his heart is right before God, in the actual delivery. The only result of his solitary practice is therefore mischievous. The intonations which he so laboriously associates with each particular passage are deficient, heartless, inanimate, or else exaggerated and fantastical; and when his soul is really thrown into the current of his discourse in its actual delivery, he will find them, if he is to speak at all well, erroneous, and obstructions to be gotten out of the way at the critical moment. If he had devoted all his labor to the preparation of his thought and style, and left the utterance to the prompting of the moment, together with the guidance of his general preparation, the tones would have been fresher and more appropriate. Should not the public speaker have any solitary practice, then, in utterance? I answer, yes; much of it. But it will be better for him to use any other composition what-

ever for such practice, than the one which he is about to deliver.—*R. L. Dabney.*

There is a large class of clergymen who know the difficulty of making themselves heard, without knowing the right method to overcome it. Their custom is to raise the voice a note or two above its natural key, and then exert all their vocal power upon that false key. This soon exhausts the speaker, but it does not help the hearer. Every man has one natural key, and the moment he abandons that, he loses all proper control of his voice; he has little power over his emphasis, and none over his modulations or inflections; and his utterances, like false coin, come back to him without having performed their office.—*E. S. Gould.*

The example of the most celebrated orators the world has seen proves the advantages of regular and constant practice of speaking; and I would on this account, most strongly recommend all to read aloud once or twice a day, using the same pitch of voice as in the pulpit, and paying especial attention to the position of the chest and throat, and to clear and proper articulation of the words.—*Samuel Fenwick.*

One Saturday I walked from Sheffield to Huddersfield to deliver on the Sunday two anniversary lectures. It was my first appearance there, and I was ambitious to acquit myself well. But in the morning I was utterly unable to do more than talk half inaudibly and quite incoherently. In the evening I was tolerable, but my voice was weak. My annoyance was excessive. I was a paradox to myself. My power seemed to come and go by some eccentric law of its own. I did not find out till years after that the utter exhaustion of my strength had exhausted the powers of speech and thought, and that entire repose instead of entire fatigue should have been the preparation for public speaking.—*Holyoake.*

We must have all observed that a speaker agitated with passion is perpetually changing the tone and pitch of his voice.—*Sir W. Jones.*

A man with a disagreeable voice was reading the Koran aloud, when a holy man passing by asked what was his monthly stipend. He answered, "nothing at all." He resumed, "Why then do you take so much trouble?" He replied, "I read for the sake of God." The other rejoined, "For the sake of God do not read; for if you read the Koran in this manner, you will destroy the splendor of Islamism."—*Saadi.*

The clear and robust sounds depend upon breathing gently; not forcing the breath, but sparing it, that the delicate muscles of the throat and palate may not be irritated, but become more elastic, and expand into an arch-like shape.—*J. E. Frobisher.*

Whatever be the tone of the voice, bass, tenor or soprano,—what most wins upon the hearers, what best seizes and most easily retains their attention, is what may be called a sympathetic voice. The best way in which an orator can impart to his voice the sympathetic power, even when he may happen not to have it naturally, is to express vividly whatever he says, and consequently to feel it well himself, in order to make others feel it. Above all, the way is to have great benevolence, great charity in the heart, and to love to put them in practice, for nothing gives more of sympathy to the voice than real goodness.—*M. Bautain.*

Preachers who know how to govern their voices are always very cautious in uttering their first words, for if they pitch too high, they soon find themselves obliged to bawl out in disagreeable, unnatural tones of speaking. Most begin low, and this is the only way to obtain audience, for it warns the people to listen, if they intend to

hear : on the contrary, if a speaker sets off loud, they will not be afraid of making a noise, for they will think they are sure to hear, make what noise they will.—*Robert Robinson.*

XI.

NOISE.

The greatest bummer is never the best bee.—*Scotch Proverb.*

The vehemence of some speakers is really a hindrance to their success.—*Bishop Simpson.*

No monotony is so dreary as that of the speech which is monotonously boisterous.—*R. L. Dabney.*

The vulgar impression has been, that passion, or, more correctly, the rage and tempest of manner, are convincing and affecting.—*E. P. Hood.*

Many a mute listener is more active with God than sometimes is the loud, swaying, perspiring figure in the desk. Gesticulation and noise are not activity of soul.—*C. A. Bartol.*

It is an infliction, not to be endured twice, to hear a brother who mistakes perspiration for inspiration tear along like a wild horse with a hornet in its ear till he has no more wind, and must needs pause to pump his lungs full again.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Reserve has a great force. Figuratively, and literally too, sometimes, the remark is true. The more you cry the less will you be heard. It is of more avail, in regard to the effect we desire to produce, to have the appearance of feeling more than we express, than that of expressing more than we feel; and the hearer partakes the more of

our emotion, the more he perceives that we are suppressing it.—*Vinet*.

Oh, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod. Pray you, avoid it.—*Shakspeare*.

XII.

PLAN.

It is a great matter to know what to say and in what order to say it.—*Cicero*.

Of all preparations, the best is to know well what you would say, and to have a clear conception of it.—*M. Bautain*.

In order to lead and sustain the progress of a discourse, one must clearly know whence one starts, and whither one goes, and never lose sight of either the point of departure or the destination. But to effect this, the road must be measured beforehand, and the principal distance marks must have been placed.—*M. Bautain*.

We may censure the method of divisions as a fatal restraint on eloquence; let us nevertheless adopt it, without fearing to diminish the energy of rhetorical movements, while it directs them with greater exactness. Genius needs to be guided in its progress, and the curb which preserves it from wandering restrains by salutary checks, and renders it the greatest service.—*Abbé Maury*.

From want of plan, from not having sufficiently re-

flected on his subject, an intelligent man finds himself embarrassed, and unable to begin writing; he perceives at once a great number of ideas, but as he has neither compared nor arranged them, nothing determines him to prefer some to others; he therefore remains in perplexity. But when he has formed a plan, when he has once collected and put in order all the thoughts which are essential to his subject, he perceives readily at once which should engage his pen.—*Buffon*.

An ability to form a good plan of a discourse is essential to a public speaker. To attempt to make, or to hear, a sermon without such a plan is, as Herder remarks, to wrestle without a firm foothold—*arena sine calce*. And however much labor the forming of a plan may cost, the labor should be cheerfully endured; since it will be so amply repaid in benefit both to the preacher himself and to his hearers.—*H. J. Ripley*.

Although the sermonizer may modify his plan after he has begun to compose, he may not begin to compose without any plan. He is to construct the best scheme possible beforehand, and to work under it, as the miner works under his movable hurdle; never disturbing the outside or the main props, but frequently altering the interior and secondary framework, as the progress of his labor may require.—*W. G. Shedd*.

It is possible to heap up a vast mass of good things all in a muddle. Ever since the day I was sent to shop with a basket, and purchased a pound of tea, a quarter-of-a-pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice, and on my way home saw a pack of hounds, and felt it necessary to follow them over hedge and ditch (as I always did when I was a boy), and found when I reached home that all the goods were amalgamated—tea, mustard and rice—into one awful mess, I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the

thread of my discourse; and this makes me keep to firstly, secondly and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Numerical terms may be generally used in connection with formulas of transition, so as not at all to impair neatness or elegance of composition. As, however, variety is desirable, and transitions can be distinctly marked by other terms, a preacher will find it agreeable and useful to have at command several words, or phrases even, that will serve this purpose. Thus, instead of uniformly saying secondly, thirdly, etc., a regard to variety and to attractiveness would recommend the employment of such terms as again, still further, in addition, moreover, once more, finally, etc.—*H. J. Ripley.*

The logical order of sermon preparation is, first, to gather the materials of which it is composed; second, to select what is most fitting, and arrange the whole into perfect order; third, to fix this in the mind, thus making it available at the moment of use.—*Wm. Pittenger.*

It is my impression that the habit of making the “plan” of a sermon first and getting the materials afterward is likely to have an injurious effect on a man’s preaching. The “plan” of a sermon is the order in which the materials are arranged, and it seems to me that the reasonable method is to arrange the materials when you have got them to arrange, not before.—*R. M. Dale.*

When the orator hath once collected the principal proofs, which are like the materials of the building, he quickly makes himself master of his subject; he already discerns the whole of the discourse through those detached ideas which form the groundwork, as soon as he directs them to one point.—*Abbé Maury.*

In general, one must not be in a hurry to form his plan. In nature, life always needs a definite time for

self-organization; and it is only ephemeral beings which are quickly formed, and they quickly pass away.—*M. Bautain.*

I care less and less for mere outlines, and more and more for a sympathetic and intelligent discussion of the subject of any text. Some preachers are outline mad; they are nothing but outline; they plan beautifully, but build nothing. Give them the word thinking as a text, and they will see in it: (1) Man in a reduced physical state—thin; (2) man in a high social state—king; (3) man in a true intellectual state—thinking. Give them as a text the word feeblest, and they will see in it: (1) a professional income—fee; (2) an indication of supreme happiness—blest; (3) a description of a human state deserving commiseration—feeblest. Give them for a text the words Come unto Me, and they will see in them: (1) a state of activity—come; (2) activity well directed—unto; (3) activity terminating upon the best of beings—Me. The outline of which this is hardly an exaggeration is irreverent trifling with the Inspired Word; it shows off the poor powers of the textual gymnast, and by so much degrades and insults the holy vocation of the Christian ministry. Study the idea of the text; try to pierce to its very heart, and having seized the truth, expound it with all simplicity and earnestness.—*J. Parker.*

It appears to me that a preacher should choose, in each discourse, a single leading truth, alarming or instructive; treat it thoroughly and exhaust it; abandoning all these divisions, so far-fetched, so trite, so hackneyed, and so nicely distinctive.—*La Bruyère.*

An order is necessary, but not an order promised and discovered from the beginning of the discourse.—*Fenelon.*

In the parts themselves there must be some one thought first, another second, another third, and so on; and we

must take care that these thoughts be not merely placed in a certain order, but that they be also connected one with another, cohering so closely that no joining may appear between them ; so that they may form a body, and not a mere collection of members. This object will be attained if we take care to observe what is suitable for each place, and study to bring together words that will not combat but embrace each other. Thus different things will not seem hurried together from distant parts, all strangers one to another, but will unite themselves in a sure bond and alliance with those that precede and those that follow ; and our speech will appear not merely a combination of phrases, but all of a piece.—*Quintilian*.

Now without doubt there is some reason in the demand for a less formal treatment of themes than prevailed in the pulpits of the last century. The old style of sermonizing, like the rude style of architecture displayed in meeting-houses a hundred years ago, showed too much of the frame-work. But some preachers, it is to be feared, have so far given way to this demand as seriously to cripple their power in the pulpit. In their efforts to throw the sermon into the form of a pleasing essay, crammed with illustrations often illustrating nobody knows what, they rob the truth of much of its power. Such a course is as if an architect, disliking the appearance of the great beams which hung below the ceiling in the rude dwellings of our fathers, should attempt to build houses after a style of architecture that should not call for beams at all. This way of throwing material into a sermon as lumber into a pile does not deserve the name of preaching. It may be brilliant and attractive talking, but it is not preaching. Such sermons, however pleasant to hear, leave no permanent impression, and might be delivered from the same pulpit two or three times a year without recognition.—*F. W. Fisk*.

As it is not enough for those who are erecting edifices to collect stones and materials, and other things useful for the architect, unless the hand of the workman be also applied to the disposition and collocation of them, so in speaking; however abundant be the quantity of matter, it will form but a confused mass and heap unless similar arrangement bind it together, disposed in regular order, and with its several parts connected one with another.—*Quintilian*.

Though partition is not always necessary, or even advantageous, yet, when it is seasonably adopted, it contributes great lucidity and agreeableness to a speech; for it not only causes what is stated to become clearer, by drawing certain particulars out of the crowd, as it were, and placing them full in the sight of the hearers, but relieves the attention by fixing a definite termination to certain parts, as distances on a road, marked by inscribed stones, appear greatly to diminish the fatigue of travelers.—*Quintilian*.

XIII.

INTRODUCTION.

He who has begun well, has half done his work.—*Horace*.

An appropriate and judicious commencement resembles a manly and graceful entry into a room, while a blunder here is not easily forgiven, nor its effect easily counterbalanced.—*S. T. Sturtevant*.

Generally the introduction should be very brief, and should contain a simple exegesis of the text, an explanation of the context, the narration of a few incidents or illustrations, all tending to prepare the mind for the

coming train of thought. If the discussion is likely to be a long one, better hasten at once to the theme.—*Bishop Simpson*.

Time spent in merely paving the way for the idea of the discourse might better be employed in the development of the idea itself.—*Theremin*.

I want discourses which make an immediate attack upon the stronghold; I desire good and solid arguments at first sight.—*Montaigne*.

A long exordium is like a long porch to an ordinary building; it is of no use, while it disfigures the structure to which it is attached: it keeps the minds of the intelligent too long in suspense, like a story which is told as a preface to some important business transaction in which men are eager to engage.—*J. S. Cannon*.

An excellent Christian woman once heard John Howe, and, as he took up an hour in his preface, her observation was, that the dear good man was so long a time in laying the cloth, that she lost her appetite; she did not think there would be any dinner after all.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

Use a variety of *exordia*, sometimes by Scripture stories, sometimes by quotations and allusions; sometimes by similes; at others, by a weighty, laconic sentence; and sometimes fall directly upon your subject, especially when it is so copious that you will be in danger of exceeding the time.—*P. Doddridge*.

An introduction may properly be somewhat philosophical—it ought always to be calm and thoughtful, addressing the mind almost exclusively, which is the first to be engaged in the business of the orator. The affections will thus be stirred, and then speaker and hearer will be equally in a condition for the more impassioned stage of the art of eloquence. No genuine heat is instan-

taneous. Time is a necessary element in the generation of any fine fervor. The Sibyl must mount her tripod for a season of preliminary exercises in order to charge her soul with the true fire of Apollo.—*Lisle*.

Care should also be taken not to speak too fast, too loud, or with too much animation at the outset.—*M. Bautain*.

Utter yourself very slowly at first, and deliberately, with careful pauses. This is at all times a great aid to a clear and perspicuous statement. It is essential to the speaker who would keep the command of himself, and consequently of his hearers.—*S. T. Sturtevant*.

The speaker ought to begin softly, modestly, and without any pompous announcement of what is to follow. The grain of mustard-seed, which is the smallest of seeds, produces a great tree, in which the birds of heaven come and take shelter. The exordium of an extemporaneous discourse ought to be the simplest thing in the world.—*M. Bautain*.

There is, in fine, nothing in all nature which pours itself wholly out and bursts forth on a sudden; but nature herself has prepared all things which are effected, even those which are effected with the most violence, by gentler beginnings.—*Cicero*.

A bold dash upon the hearers at first, is not congruous with the cool state they are in, nor with the steady and increasing interest which we wish to preserve in their minds.—*E. Porter*.

You must, in the beginning, speak gently, remembering that your auditors are neither yet in heaven, nor in the air, nor at all elevated in their way thither, but upon earth, and in a place of worship.—*Robert Robinson*.

While the thought of the exordium should by no means be trivial or uninteresting, neither should it be ambitious.

It should not vie in splendor with all that are to succeed it, lest it should raise too much promise to the expectation of the hearers. The impression which they carry away from a sermon is usually that produced by its concluding parts. If you fail there to fulfill the promise of your outset, the pleasing surprise which you gave them in commencing will not cause them to pardon you the disappointment.—*R. L. Dabney.*

The speaker who by pomp of periods and swell of voice at first advertises a great climax he does not come to, is like those people who loudly herald some great feat, like flying, or walking on the water, which they are about to accomplish, but which they ridiculously fail in. The wise orator will so order his introduction, by his modesty of bearing and tone, that instead of leaving his hearers far this side the goal of their expectation, in the valley, when they looked to be borne to the mount, he may rather disappoint them in a manner just the reverse—taking them to rapt altitudes when they only expected to be carried up a little way. Hearers who get less than is promised feel themselves cheated, and are put out of good humor; but they who get more are made happy. Pretension has a thousand times to retire in disgrace.—*Lisle.*

There are three principal ends which a preacher should propose, namely, to instruct, to please, and to affect; but, of these three, that which should reign in an exordium is to please. You should indeed also aim to instruct and affect, but less to instruct than to please, and less still to affect than to instruct. If you can judiciously and properly introduce anything tender into an exordium, you may do so to good purpose; but, be that as it may, the agreeable should reign in this part.—*Claude.*

Of the old precepts, this still remains in force, that no unusual expression, no highly-wrought metaphor, nothing borrowed from what is obsolete and antiquated, or from

poetic license, should appear in the exordium. For we are not as yet admitted to full freedom of speech, and the attention of the audience, being still fresh, keeps us under restraint, but when their minds are propitiated and warmed, greater liberty will be tolerated, and especially when we have entered on those moral topics of declamation whose natural fertility prevents the boldness of an expression from being observed amid the splendor of beauty that surrounds it.—*Quintilian*.

Prayers on the lyre have called the short prelude that they execute, for the purpose of conciliating favor, before they enter upon the regular contest for the prize, a proœmium ; orators, in consequence, have distinguished the address which they make to gain the good-will of the hearers, before they commence their pleading, by the same appellation.—*Quintilian*.

To be confused in memory, or to lose our fluency of speech, has nowhere a worse effect than at the commencement, as a faulty exordium may be compared to a countenance disfigured with scars ; and that pilot is surely one of the worst who runs his vessel aground as it is leaving the harbor. As to the length of an exordium, it must be regulated by the nature of the cause. Simple causes require but a short introduction ; such as are perplexed, suspicious, or unpopular, demand a longer one. But those who have prescribed laws for all exordia, saying that they must be limited to four sentences, make themselves ridiculous. Yet, immoderate length in the introduction is no less to be avoided, lest the speech should seem to have a head of disproportionate size, and lest that which ought to prepare the hearer should weary him.—*Quintilian*.

XIV.

STYLE.

Style may be too good, as well as too bad; too refined and polished, as well as too rough and homely.—*W. Gresley.*

The power of a good style in contributing to the efficacy of thoughts, is demonstrated by the fact that skill in the use of language will often impart force to obvious and familiar truths.—*H. J. Ripley.*

It is a hard task, but he who wishes to be a forcible preacher must submit to it, viz: to cut off without regret or mercy whatever is superfluous.—*Dean Swift.*

Style is only the frame to hold our thoughts. It is like the sash of a window: a heavy sash will obscure the light. The object is to have as little sash as will hold the lights, that we may not think of the frame, but have the most light.—*Prof. Park.*

Altogether the style of a writer is a faithful representative of his mind; therefore, if any man wish to write a clear style, let him first be clear in his thoughts; and if he would write in a noble style, let him first possess a noble soul.—*Goethe.*

As our idea is more or less obscure, the expression which follows it is less distinct or more pure. What one conceives well he announces clearly, and words for expressing it come readily.—*Boileau.*

In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.—*St. Paul.*

In writing, I always endeavor to understand myself.—*Fontenelle.*

The more general the terms are, the picture is fainter; the more special they are, the brighter.—*Dr. Campbell.*

Confusion and perplexity are, in writing, indeed without excuse, because any one may, if he pleases, know whether he understands or sees through what he is about; and it is unpardonable in a man to lay his thoughts before others when he is conscious that he himself does not know whereabouts he is, or how the matter before him stands. It is coming abroad in disorder, which he ought to be dissatisfied to find himself in at home.—*Bishop Butler.*

I approve and admire all those ornaments in a discourse which conduce to persuade; I reject those only where the speaker, full of himself, and wanting to make a display, amuses his hearers by his fine talents, instead of filling them with his subject alone. On this ground, I think that not only all plays upon words (which are weak and childish), but all plays upon ideas,—that is to say, all merely brilliant thoughts which have in them nothing solid and convincing, are to be condemned.—*Fenelon.*

All that does not promote the design of the orator hinders it; and certainly nothing so little promotes, and consequently so greatly hinders, the awakening of a strong affection that seizes upon the whole mind, and breaks forth into acts, as that light play of the imagination which leaps from figure to figure. Hence we assert that no figure should be allowed in an oration, unless each and every word in it, according to the expression of Quintilian, awaken an affection of some sort. Any other use of figures on the part of the orator would betray a departure from his purpose,—i.e., a moral weakness,—and instead of contributing to his design, would only stand in its way,—i.e., would leave the mind cold, instead of warming it.—*Theremin.*

Of all the figures of oratory, interrogation is the most overwhelming and rapid.—*Abbé Maury.*

Interrogations are passionate figures. They are, indeed, on so many occasions the native language of passion, that their use is extremely frequent; and in ordinary conversation, when men are heated, they prevail as much as in the most sublime oratory. The unfigured, literal use of interrogation is to ask a question; but when men are prompted by passion, whatever they would affirm or deny with great vehemence, they naturally put in the form of a question; expressing thereby the strongest confidence of the truth of their own sentiment, and appealing to their hearers for the impossibility of the contrary.—*Dr. Blair.*

It is vanity, if the orator is profuse in figures for the sake of show and ornament; it is obtuseness of moral feeling, if the orator employs them unsuitably; it is sluggishness, incapacity of enthusiasm in respect to lofty ideas, if the orator does not understand how to give to a thought those forcible turns by which alone he can produce the designed impression. Hence, not by means of the mere knowledge of this or of other rules, but only by means of those moral excellences which are opposed to the faults above mentioned, will the orator be enabled to employ figures rightly and with effect. In order to this, a mind is needed which can warm toward moral ideas; which, along with all its inspiration and enthusiasm, can keep up a calm, accurate survey of circumstances, and which is far more interested in the true advantage of the hearer—in his improvement and elevation—than in his applause.—*Theremin.*

Horace speaks of those who, in some great and ambitious monument in brass, express the nails, and imitate the soft hairs, while the principal of all, the figure itself, is unstudied, unsatisfactory, perhaps disgusting; there are those who are content to be artists in the small—in the little and insignificant; their great aim is to be neat, to carve giants' heads in cherrystones. You wonder and admire, but are quite unedified. Such preachers peril all

their usefulness in the production of "innocent little sermons"; utterly powerless for any moral effect. It is the movement of the soul which will enable a man to speak.—*E. P. Hood.*

If a preacher habitually writes in a simply didactic style, his delivery will be rather that of a teacher, or a reader, than of a public speaker. Let him break up his habit of composition, and adopt, in suitable paragraphs, a bold, nervous, interrogatory style, or the rapid, familiar, brief style of animated conversation; and would not this transformation of style naturally transform also his delivery?—*H. J. Ripley.*

It is from the fear of losing isolated, fugitive thoughts; it is from the desire of introducing everywhere striking traits, that there are so many compositions formed of inlaid work, and so few that are founded at a single cast. Nothing is more opposed to warmth of style.—*Buffon.*

I am less and less in favor of quotation in sermons. My tendency used to be very much that way. As my manner becomes warmer, directer, and more practical, I let these brilliant patches alone.—*J. W. Alexander.*

Of what value is a golden key, if it will not open what we wish? and what is the harm of a wooden one, if it will accomplish this purpose? since all we seek is to obtain access to what is concealed.—*Augustine.*

That work of art is called simple, which does not suggest to him who examines it any suspicion of the labor which has been expended on its production. It seems to have been produced without painstaking, without a rigid application of rules. It appears to be as it is, because it could not have been otherwise. The seeming ease and naturalness of its construction make a way for it at once to the heart. A discourse is simple, when its propositions are so stated and proved as to ingratiate themselves at once into the belief; instead of being incumbered with

such a parade of argument, as to occupy the mind with logical forms rather than the main and substantial truth. It is simple, when its arrangement is such as to disclose the whole subject easily to the view, instead of being disfigured with artificial divisions and subdivisions, concealing the doctrine which is parceled out thus unnecessarily. It is simple when its sentences are formed as if they could not have been written in any other way, and its ornaments appear to spring spontaneously from the theme; and this noble simplicity is wanting, when the style swells into pompous periods, and the metaphors seem not to have presented themselves of their own accord, but to have been sought out with care. A sermon which glides along in this simple course enters at once into the hearer's mind.—*Schott.*

The language which betrays art, and carries not an air of simplicity and sincerity, may, indeed, by some hearers, be thought not only very fine, but even very energetic; this very circumstance, however, may be taken for a proof that it is not so; for if it had been, they would not have thought about it, but would have been occupied exclusively with the subject. An unstudied and natural air, therefore, is an excellence to which the true orator,—i.e., he who is aiming to carry his point,—will be ready to sacrifice any other that may interfere with it.—*H. J. Ripley.*

The words used in the pulpit should be such as the whole audience can understand. It is not sufficient that the words can be found in Webster's or Worcester's dictionary, or that they occur sometimes in magazines and reviews. People do not carry either Webster or Worcester to church with them; nor is the percentage large, in any ordinary congregation, who read magazines and reviews. The words should be, in the main, such as we would use in common conversation with the people whom we address,—that is, established and well-known English.—*Francis Wayland.*

Even where the topics are not such as are fairly open to censure, a large class of preachers, especially among the young, grievously err by investing them with the technicalities of science and philosophy; either because they foolishly suppose they thereby give their compositions a more philosophical air, or because they disdain the homely and the vulgar.—*Edinburgh Review*.

I talked of preaching, and of the great success which those called Methodists have. Boswell.—Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain, familiar manner, which is the way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregation.—*Johnson*.

Avoid all exotic phrases, scholastic terms, and forced rhetorical figures, since it is not difficult to make easy things appear hard; but to render hard things easy is the hardest part of a good orator as well as preacher.—*Archbishop Usher*.

A young composer of sermons was reading a discourse for the purpose of obtaining the approbation of the author of the "Horæ Homileticæ" [Charles Simeon]. At length he reached the following passage: "Amidst the tumult and ecstasy of the children of Israel, the son of Amram stood unmoved." "The son of Amram!" interrupted Simeon; "the son of Amram! Who was he?" "Why, sir, I meant Moses." "Then," thundered the critic, "if you mean Moses, why not say Moses?"—*Kidder*.

Let argument strongly predominate. Sacrifice your flowers, and let your columns be Doric, rather than Composite; the better medium is Ionic. Avoid, as you would the gates of death, the reputation of floridity.—*William Wirt*.

Beauty of language ought not to be regarded as an

end in itself. However desirable such beauty may be, when associated with clearness and grandeur of thought, and when it naturally follows the orator's conceptions, to seek for it as a distinct object will insure a failure as to the orator's legitimate end.—*Quintilian*.

We must never construct ornament, but only ornament construction.—*Artist*.

A gaudy verbosity is always eloquence in the opinion of him that writes it; but what is the effect on the reader? Real eloquence strikes on your mind with irresistible force, and leaves you not the possibility of asking or thinking whether it be eloquence; but the sounding sentences of these writers leave you cool enough to examine with doubtful curiosity a language that seems threatening to move or astonish you, without actually doing it. It is something like the case of a false alarm of thunder; where a sober man, that is not apt to startle at sounds, looks out to see whether it be not the rumbling of a cart.—*John Foster*.

I have known a great many most admirable preachers who lost almost all real sympathetic hold upon their congregations because they were too literary, too periphrastic, and too scholastic in their diction. They always preferred to use large language, rather than good Saxon English. But let me tell you, there is a subtle charm in the use of plain language that pleases people, they scarcely know why. It gives bell-notes which ring out suggestions to the popular heart. There are words that men have heard when boys at home, around the hearth and the table, words that are full of father and of mother, and full of common and domestic life. Those are the words that afterward, when brought into your discourse, will produce a strong influence on your auditors, giving an element of success; words which will have an effect that your hearers themselves cannot understand. For, after all, simple lan-

guage is loaded down and stained through with the best testimonies and memories of life.—*H. W. Beecher.*

When you doubt between words, use the plainest, the commonest, the most idiomatic. Eschew fine words as you would rouge; love simple ones as you would native roses on your cheek.—*J. C. Hare.*

Never be grandiloquent when you want to drive home a searching truth. Don't whip with a switch that has the leaves on, if you want to tingle.—*H. W. Beecher.*

Strike out all such words as "methinks I see," "cherubim and seraphim," "the glinting stars," "the stellar heavens," "the circumambient air," "the rustling wings," "the pearly gates," "the glistening dew," "the meandering rills," and "the crystal battlements of heaven." I know how pretty they look to the young eye, and how sweetly they sound in the young ear; but let them go without a sigh. If you have spoken of God as the Deity, put your pen through the word "Deity," and write "God" in its stead; if you are tempted to tell your hearers that Jonah spent a portion of his life under the care of a "submarine custodian," don't hesitate to say plainly that it was only a whale; if you should so far forget yourself as to write the word "pandemonium," put it out and write the monosyllable over its ruins; and if in a moment of delirium you should write "my beloved, come with me on the pinions of imagination," pause and consider soberly whether you had not on the whole better remain where you are. This process being completed, greatly to the disfigurement of your manuscript, rewrite the discourse with the most watchful care, determined that everybody who hears you shall not be left in doubt of your meaning.—*J. Parker.*

Speech being the vehicle of thought, words should never be used which are not generally understood. There are terms in language which are common to the non-literary; only such should be adopted, and all scientific,

philosophical, technical, theological, and even devotional terminology should be discarded.—*Abbé Mullois*.

There is too much reminiscence of our philosophical and scholastic studies in our sermons. It often appears as if we were speaking to a meeting of young bachelors in theology.—*Abbé Mullois*.

Uncommon expressions, strong flashes of wit, pointed similes, and epigrammatic turns, especially when they recur too frequently, often disfigure rather than embellish a discourse. It commonly happens in such cases that twenty insipid conceits are found for one thought which is really beautiful.—*Hume*.

I am tormented with the desire of preaching better than I can. I like to see a pretty child or pretty flower, but in a sermon prettiness is out of place. To my ear it would be anything but commendation, should it be said to me, "You have given a pretty sermon." If I were upon trial for my life, and my advocate should amuse the jury with his tropes and figures, burying his argument beneath a profusion of the flowers of rhetoric, I would say to him, "Tut, man, you care more for your vanity than for my hanging. Put yourself in my place; speak in view of the gallows, and you will tell your story plainly and earnestly." I have no objection to a lady's winding a sword with ribbons and studding it with roses when she presents it to her lover; but in the day of battle he will tear away the ornaments, and use the naked edge to the enemy.—*Robert Hall*.

It also belongs to this adaptation in the oration, that the orator never rise into expressions, phrases and images that are above the language of cultivated society, even before an auditory that would be able to follow a higher style of thought, and to understand more exquisite modes of speech. I mention this for the sake of those who think they impart a peculiar dignity and force to their discourse

by the use of poetic ornament, by employing words which they bring forth from the dust of past centuries, and by constructions which are foreign to pure prose. But this is always only a cold show without power: if power, as I affirm, can mean nothing else than the efficiency of the oration in exciting affection. In the throng of active life, amidst heart-rending misfortunes, during the silent hours of contemplation, does the hearer make known his thoughts and feelings to himself and to others, in a highly flowery style, and in strange, unusual phraseology? Certainly not. The style of expression which spontaneously associates itself with the silent emotions of our heart, when they come forth into consciousness, is always as noble as it is simple. If, therefore, the orator would penetrate into our inner life, and renew again the traces of forgotten thoughts and feelings,—if he would actually address us, he must employ the very same well-known and customary language in which we are wont to commune with ourselves. Every strange expression, nay, every unusual phrase, tears us away from ourselves, instead of leading us back into ourselves; and the stream of inward harmonies, which perhaps was on the point of flowing forth, suddenly breaks upon some such unexpected obstacle, and is dissipated. Moreover, with the disturbance of this flow is connected displeasure toward a man who decks himself out in a showy costume of sounding phrases, which, after all, are not so very difficult to collect together, instead of employing my common, every-day language along with me, to his own true advantage as well as mine.—*Theremin.*

The style of period that is most favorable to easy and impressive delivery is that which moves forward from the beginning to the end with fewest breaks by commas and semicolons. The voice must not be arrested too often, nor must the listener be burdened with too many subordinate shadings of thought. A simple and flowing movement, like that of a strain of music, will happily serve speaker

and hearer ; while a broken and staccato style, a new adjunct with every three or five words, will check a free utterance and tire the overtaxed ear. If any one will take the pains to count the commas and semicolons in the discourses of the great orators, he will find them comparatively scarce. He will find periods well balanced, but smoothly sustained rather than chopped-up and chaotic. They move "right on" from commencement to conclusion. They are almost like beams of light in their directness. And this is a necessity of true oratory, which aims at simple and broad effects, and not at minuteness and diversity of impression.—*Lisle*.

It may happen that he who is always seeking something extravagant, may sometimes find something great ; but it happens only seldom, and does not compensate for undoubted faults.—*Quintilian*.

In a speech of which the language is much extolled the sense is too little regarded.—*Quintilian*.

A becoming and magnificent dress adds dignity to men ; but effeminate and luxurious apparel, while it fails to adorn the person, discovers the depravity of the mind. In like manner, the transparent and variegated style of some speakers deprives their matter, when clothed in such a garb of words, of all force and spirit. I would, therefore, recommend care about words, and the utmost care about matter. The best words generally attach themselves to our subject, and show themselves by their own light ; but we set ourselves to seek for words, as if they were always hidden, and trying to keep themselves from being discovered. We never consider that they are to be found close to the subject on which we have to speak, but look for them in strange places, and do violence to them when we have found them. It is with a more manly spirit that eloquence is to be pursued, who, if she is in vigor throughout her frame, will think it no part of her study to polish

her nails and smooth her hair. It generally happens that the more attention is paid to such niceties, the more oratory is deteriorated ; for the best expressions are such as are least far-fetched, and have an air of simplicity, appearing to spring from truth itself. Those which betray care refuse to appear otherwise than artificial and studied ; they fail to exhibit grace, and do not produce conviction ; besides that, they obscure the sense, and choke the crop, as it were, with a superabundance of herbage.—*Quintilian*.

A common-place style is especially to be avoided, since platitudes kindle neither speaker nor hearer. Even poppies are not more charged with morphine than are tame and insipid periods. A common thought in a common dress is no welcome visitor, and where there is a continuous procession of such, the spectator can only withdraw his interest, and let them pass. Our escape from this tedious sand-flat in composition will be facilitated by freshness and depth of thought, and by having an eye to the fashion of our periods before they are permitted to come from the pen. Let the writer insist on an interesting turn of the words before he allows them to pass out on parade, thus dressing his fit ideas in attractive costumes by an ideal process, as Raphael saw his angels in vision before he began the task of transferring them to canvas. There can be little doubt that our great need to the end of avoiding common-place is more *forethought* in conception and composition.—*Lisle*.

Those periods in which most of beauty and force are combined, are births from the brain and the heart in their happy conjunction. Intelligence and emotion leave worthy progeny.—*Lisle*.

XV.

ILLUSTRATION.

He is the best orator who can turn men's ears into eyes.—*Arabian Proverb.*

Speech ought equally to strike the mind and senses of all men.—*Cicero.*

Reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon, but similitudes are the windows which give the best light.—*Thos. Fuller.*

You should not attempt to illustrate that which is already perfectly plain. Do not hold up a lighted taper under pretense of making the sun visible.—*Wm. M. Taylor.*

I urge you to insist upon your mind giving you something in the way of illustration. Look for figures; work for them; take them in their rudest outline, and improve them.—*J. Parker.*

If you can now and again put a simple and telling anecdote into your sermon, do so; but be very careful not to go anecdote mad.—*J. Parker.*

The chief and common object of a parable is by the story to win attention and maintain it; to give plainness and point, and therefore, power to the truth. By awakening and gratifying the imagination, the truth finds its way more readily to the heart and makes a deeper impression on the memory. The story, like a float, keeps it from sinking; like a nail, fastens it in the mind; like the feathers of an arrow, makes it strike, and, like the barb, makes it stick.—*Thomas Guthrie.*

If in your discourses, when taking a comprehensive

view of truth, you illustrate each step by an appropriate picture, you will find that the plain people of your congregation will go away, remembering every one of your illustrations. If they are asked, "Well, what was the illustration for?" they will stop and consider: "What was he saying then?" They will fish for it, and will generally get the substance of it. "Oh, it was this; he was proving so and so, and then he illustrated it by this." They will remember the picture; and, if they are questioned, the picture will bring back the truth to them; and after that they will remember both together.—*H. W. Beecher.*

The orator must be, to a certain extent, a poet. We are such imaginative creatures, that nothing so works on the human mind, barbarous or civil, as a trope. Condense some daily experience into a glowing symbol, and an audience is electrified. They feel as if they already possessed some new right and power over a fact, which they can detach, and so completely master in thought. It is a wonderful aid to the memory, which carries away the image, and never loses it.—*R. W. Emerson.*

Illustrations serve to a better end than the direct disclosure in more vivid aspects of the speaker's thought, although their office is highly important in this particular. For it is no trivial contrast, the difference between the truth dimly seen amid abstract periods, and the truth disclosed and glorified by apt pictures. But beyond this, illustrations tend to foster the imagination, which is a gift of our nature most friendly to faith. Almost any one will readily recall the fact that artists and poets are rarely if ever given to skepticism; and must it not be due in part to the circumstance that their rare imagination enables them to body forth the unseen, and invest the divine with the aspects of living reality? Hence that preaching may be regarded as eminently helpful to faith, which, while furnishing instant visions of ideal things,

also furnishes a successful discipline of the gift that idealizes.—*Lisle*.

Poetry differs from mere eloquence only in that its descriptions have more of inspiration, and that it employs language of a bolder character. Prose has its paintings, although less highly colored; without these, it is impossible to warm the imagination, or to excite the passions of men. A simple narration cannot move the affections; our hearers must not only be informed of facts; they must be made to realize them; they must have them brought before their eyes by an exact representation of the affecting circumstances accompanying them.—*Fenelon*.

There are many sources from which to draw illustrations; but such illustrations as will come to the common people, who are the main part of the minister's audience, with the happiest effect, will be those that are found along the walks of daily life. The full force of these will be felt, since all their bearings will be readily seen. They are already a part of experience, and will be easily applied to the new purpose for which they are brought forward. They are not of that unfortunate class of illustrations, by no means uncommon, that need to be illustrated. It will awaken a special interest thus to elevate the common events and aspects of life to the high office of reflecting great truths, like that which attends a neighbor who is borne to an eminent rank in art, or literature, or civil government. The Savior of men knew well the secret here hinted at, and turned the most familiar scenes into mirrors of his thought; and the most successful preachers since him, the enchanting conjurers with the pulpit wand, have found their illustrations near at hand. They have exalted daily life by making its incidents helpful in disclosing the kingdom of heaven. But remoter sources of illustration are not to be neglected, such as science, art, poetry, history, the classics, and, above all, the Bible, whose

many and strong pictures of character and experience will be doubly effective by reason of their sacredness and familiarity.—*Lisle*.

An illustration is a window in an argument, and lets in light. You may reason without an illustration; but where you are employing a process of pure reasoning and have arrived at a conclusion, if you can then by an illustration flash back light upon what you have said, you will bring into the minds of your audience a realization of your argument that they cannot get in any other way.—*H. W. Beecher*.

It is a great merit to set forth the objects of which we speak in lively colors, and so that they may, as it were, be seen; for our language is not sufficiently effective, and has not that absolute power which it ought to have, if it impresses only the ears, and if the hearer feels that the particulars on which he is to give a decision are merely stated to him, and not described graphically or displayed to the eyes of his mind.—*Quintilian*.

Beware of those extremely popular compilations of illustrations which are in every Sunday-school teacher's hand, for nobody will thank you for repeating what everybody already knows by heart; if you tell anecdotes, let them have some degree of freshness and originality; keep your eyes open, and gather flowers from the garden and the field with your own hands; they will be far more acceptable than withered specimens borrowed from other men's bouquets, however beautiful those may once have been. Illustrate richly and aptly, but not so much with parables imported from foreign sources as with apt similes growing out of the subject itself.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

XVI.

WIT.

'Tis pitiful to court a grin, when you should woo a soul: to break a jest, when pity would inspire pathetic exhortation; and to address the skittish fancy with facetious tales, when sent with God's commission to the heart.—*Cowper*.

Avoid many points of wit;—when much of this appears it renders a man suspected whether he is in earnest for God. There are too many instances of this in Spratt, of whom it might be said (as well as of his friend Cowley) “He more had pleas'd us, had he pleased us less.”—*Philip Doddridge*.

Avoid such stories whose mention may suggest bad thoughts to the auditors, and use not a light comparison to make thereof a grave application, for fear lest the poison go farther than the antidote.—*Thomas Fuller*.

People sometimes ask whether it is right to make people laugh in church by something that you say from the pulpit,—as if laughter were always one invariable thing; as if there were not a smile which swept across a great congregation like the breath of a May morning, making it fruitful for whatever good thing might be sowed in it, and another laughter that was like the crackling of thorns under a pot.—*Phillips Brooks*.

Don't be afraid of the occasional service of humor; don't always put a seal upon your wit; let your whole nature preach; let fancy, humor, wit, sarcasm, contribute their share of help to your ministry; they will be of use as allies, if you be careful to have something stronger on the main line.—*J. Parker*.

Do not be afraid even of an illustration which may have a dash of humor in it. I would not choose it for the humor of it, but neither would I reject it on that account, if it were peculiarly pat. There are some, indeed, who think it is wrong to utter a word in the pulpit that might make a smile ripple over an audience. And, indeed, if the production of the smile were the only reason for saying it, I should be disposed to agree with them. But if, in spite of the smile, the illustration will rivet a truth in the mind of the hearer, then I should not hesitate to employ it.—*Wm. M. Taylor.*

Even this vein of laughing, as I could produce out of grave authors, hath oftentimes a strong and sinewy force in teaching and confuting.—*Milton.*

XVII.

LISTEN TO SELF.

Make trial of your eloquence upon yourself; become, so to speak, the auditor of your own discourses.—*Abbé Maury.*

A man who talks to himself will find out what suits the heart of man.—*Cecil.*

Let every preacher first see how his notes do move himself, and then he shall have comfort to deliver them to others like an experienced medicine which himself hath proved.—*Henry Smith.*

If your theme kindle not a fire in your own soul, it will prove but a bundle of cold fagots on the Lord's altar, from which the people will derive no heat.—*Lisle.*

Preach your sermon first to your own soul.—*Philip Doddridge.*

We must put ourselves in the place of those who are to hear us, and try on our own heart the train of thought which we give to our discourse, to ascertain if one be suited to the other, and whether we may confidently expect that the hearer will be obliged to yield to us.—*Pascal*.

It will greatly aid the preacher in deciding what to accept and what to reject in the writing of his sermon, or in the casting of his brief for extemporizing, if he will first try the effect of his proposed ideas on his own mind and heart. Do they strike him as of that sort that he would care to hear them if he were in the pew instead of in the pulpit? Are they fresh and charged with power, as they come before him to claim a place in his discourse? Are they like those welcome visitors toward whom his heart warms, and with whom he can enter into inspired communion; or only like the comers he cares little about and for whom he has but a cold greeting? If the former, he will do well to take them to his pulpit; if the latter, he had better pass them by, and seek others that do move himself.—*Lisle*.

XVIII.

MANUSCRIPT.

The gude man ha' a pith wi' his paper.—*Scotch Woman*.

Sermons, it is well to remember, are designed for the pulpit, not for the press.—*H. J. Ripley*.

Some of the best essays in our language appear in the shape of printed sermons; but if these were to be preached as they are published, they would be unimpressive sermons, precisely because they are good essays.—*W. Gresley*.

Elaborate composition is so far from being necessary to

the success of public discourses, that in many situations a person of delicate and refined taste will be obliged to maintain a severe conflict between his duty and his habits, before he can come to be useful from the pulpit.—*Bishop Sumner.*

The origin and fount of all good writing is sound and abundant knowledge.—*Horace.*

Fuseli, in reference to painting, has said: "He alone can conceive and compose who sees the whole at once before him." So in sermonizing; no man can compose with the highest degree of vividness and power until his mind grasps the idea of his composition in its entirety.—*D. P. Kidder.*

Compose as much of your sermon as you can at a sitting. Choose to do this when you are in a good frame. It will give a graceful freedom to your style, and when you have prepared your materials, it will not be difficult to dispatch your sermon in five or six hours.—*P. Doddridge.*

Each must select for himself the system or plan which he deems best. The mode is not material, so the end is gained. One feels that he can do nothing without the "afflatus of celestial fire"; another obeys the direction of Dr. Johnson—"Sit down doggedly, sir." The latter plan is the safe one. The afflatus seldom comes at the right moment, though better work can be done under its influence; but the habit of "sitting down doggedly" will ultimately bring the "afflatus" more easily and powerfully.—*Bishop Simpson.*

When you once begin to write your sermon, you should write it off with as little interruption as possible. While the afflatus and glow of composition are upon you,—while your head is full and your heart warm, you should pour "yourself forth upon your paper" freely and fluently. It

should be "the gushing out from the well-spring of the heart." Do not now pause to inquire and investigate; do not think of correcting, amending, or polishing; care not for your rules of rhetoric; but go on without rest or pause—"nec mora nec requies"—until either you have finished your course, or are fairly out of breath. I should even advise you to leave blanks, rather than stop to seek for words. By this mode your sermon will have all the freshness and animation of the extemporaneous style—probably more; for you will not, when you preach it, be embarrassed for words, or nervous from fear of failure.—*W. Gresley.*

Choose to composé when you are in your best frame. Therefore take such time, that if you should be under any particular indisposition for study, or meet with any interruption in it, you may not be forced upon it at so unfavorable a season. But take care you do not too soon conclude yourselves incurably unfit; the frame often mends. Take notice what parts of the day you are most inclined and in the best frame to compose, and secure those hours to yourselves.—*Philip Doddridge.*

Compose continuously. When the preacher has made all the preparation, general and particular, of which we have spoken, and his mind and heart are ready to work, he should proceed in the composition of a sermon without intermission. The intellect works with far the greatest intensity and energy when it works continuously. It acquires strength by motion, and hence a stop in its action diminishes its force. When, therefore, a full preparation for its agency has been made, it ought to be allowed, or if need be, compelled to work as hard and as long as is compatible with the physical structure of the individual.—*W. G. Shedd.*

The sermon should be carefully read and re-read, paragraph by paragraph, till the whole has become so familiar

that the preacher can, by catching a few words here and there, complete a sentence. . . . The preacher thus fully acquainted with his manuscript, and intent on his subject, can steadily view his audience; his hearers and himself can enjoy the reciprocal benefit of each other's eyes. His arms will be comparatively free to obey the impulse of his soul. His whole person, instead of being statue-like, will be animated; and he may approximate to speaking from the heart—the perfection of speaking—as near as one can with a written discourse before him. By such preparation he may combine many of the advantages of extemporaneous address with those of written discourse.—*H. J. Ripley.*

Be sure to be master of your notes, in proportion to the degree in which you intend to use them, that you may not be entangled. It is a sad reproach to a man when he cannot read his own writing before a congregation, yet this I have often seen.—*Philip Doddridge.*

In repeating written sermons, it is too much the habit of preachers to snatch up at the last moment, for an exchange, or for a second preaching, a manuscript sermon, without studying it carefully. Every sermon preached, whether written or unwritten, whether preached the first or the fortieth time, should be a fresh discourse. There should be not only an intellectual but a spiritual reproduction of the sermon; it should be thought out afresh; it should be re-created; it should be prayed over and breathed upon by the same intense feeling as that in which it was composed.—*J. M. Hopkin.*

Another reason, also, why the preachers of written sermons are for the most part heavy in their delivery is, that they do not take sufficient pains to make themselves familiar with their own compositions before they go into the pulpit. It is perfectly impossible that any man who preaches with a manuscript before him should utter his

sentences with energy, and give the proper emphasis to his words, who has not well studied his sermon after having written it, and who is not so far master of it as to be able to finish each period by catching only the first two or three words with his eye. For not only has the keeping the eyes constantly fixed upon the cushion of the pulpit a very bad appearance, but it almost inevitably tends to produce a monotonous tone of voice, and a lifeless delivery. Every minister, therefore, who writes his sermons, ought to read them over twice, at the least, before he goes into the pulpit; not merely that he may get his mind filled with his subject, but, also, that he may be familiar with the very words he is going to utter.—*Fenelon*.

Let me entreat you to add one half crown a year to the article of paper, to transcribe your sermons in as large and plain a manner as you can, and either make no interlineation, or change the whole leaf; for we, your hearers, would rather you should be less correct than perpetually stammering, which I take to be one of the worst solecisms in rhetoric.—*Dean Swift*.

Educate yourself into the free and unfettered use of a full manuscript. I do not mean that you should keep your face close to the desk, and never lift your eyes from the page, unless it be to look right up into the ventilator that is overhead; but that you should preach from your manuscript. Write in a fair, round, legible hand; marking the beginnings of your sentences, and the different stages of your argument, in such a way that your eye may easily catch them. Spend a couple of hours with your manuscript before you enter the pulpit, seeking to catch the spirit of your theme, and to kindle under the enthusiasm of your words.—*Wm. M. Taylor*.

The evil of using the manuscript is, perhaps, not so much that it may engender a dull manner of reading for -

preaching, as that it allows the preacher's mind to be inactive; although this is indeed the real cause of the dullness of manner. The sermon was preached by his mind when it was composed; it ought to be equally in his thought when delivered as it was when composed, and to be uttered as from the heart, not as a re-perusal of former thoughts; otherwise it is hardly the act of preaching. But the ease of reading from the manuscript favors the inclination of the mind to relax the earnest attention and deep feeling which the subject demands. This is the evil which follows all artificial helps to the memory,—that as labor is saved to the mind, action is lost. The remedy is, to take care that the mind does not relax from severe thought, because it has the writing to fall back upon, and to keep it still full of the subject.

The reason, perhaps, why those preachers who read their sermons are, for the most part, cold and lifeless in their manner and delivery is, that in the composition of them they entirely forget the congregation. Shut up in the study, they sit down to write a sermon just as a man might sit down to write a moral essay upon any given subject. They forget that this sermon is to be addressed to a number of people, with a view not only to inform and convince their understandings, but to move their affections and warm their hearts, and that it should be so constructed and worded as to give the idea that the preacher is not merely putting forth general aphorisms and abstract truths, but that he is speaking to the individuals immediately present, about things in which they themselves are personally and deeply interested. Hence it happens that their sermons have more the form and character of an essay than of a pastoral address; and the inevitable consequence is, that the sentiments and phraseology being vague and general, they are delivered without energy and without point. Now, to avoid this, it is desirable that a preacher should compose his sermons with his congregation present in his mind's eye before him.—*Fenelon*.

It enables the preacher to acquire the oratorical style, without which the extemporizer cannot excel; it checks in some too great an affluence of thought or language; in others it remedies the want of a ready and copious flow of fitting words; it many times protects both speaker and hearer against the effects of hasty and unguarded words in searching and admonitory sermons. It also secures us from the obscurity and misunderstanding caused by those long and complex sentences which the extemporizer is often tempted, if not compelled, to construct. It insures us even against the teasing and distracting fear of blunders and break-downs. And above all, it invests the preacher with the confidence and persuasiveness of one who is delivering matters of intelligent and well-grounded belief, thoughts which he has carefully selected, accurately weighed, and stamped with the authentic marks of his full and permanent approval.—*G. W. Hervey.*

A sermon should be written out with care. We are able to secure thereby that each portion of the discourse shall receive its due measure of attention. Even the most skillful extemporizers are in danger of enriching the earlier parts of their sermons at the expense of the later. They do not seem to have got quite above the fear that haunts the young orator, that he will never find enough in his theme to fill out the time allotted for his address, so they put a great deal into the introduction and the sections which immediately follow, and when they come to the closing portions, where all their resources should be brought into operation, they have no time left for the effective presentation even of the thoughts which they have premeditated, and are obliged to hasten over them so rapidly that the hearers lose all sense of their importance.—*Wm. M. Taylor.*

Confusion and perplexity in writing are without excuse, because any one may, if he pleases, know whether he

understands and sees through what he is about; and it is unpardonable for a man to lay his thoughts before others when he is conscious that he himself does not know whereabouts he is, or how the matter before him stands. It is coming abroad in a disorder which he ought to be dissatisfied to find himself in at home.—*Bishop Butler.*

The pulpit cannot maintain its moulding efficacy, its ruling position, unless the men thereof are men of the sturdy pen, as well as of the nimble tongue. People, take them as they rise, are greatly given to be lazy; hard thinking is hard work, and lazy men won't do it if they can help it. Let the mere off-hand be the mode and the law, and we shall have mere flippant, off-hand, extemporaneous dribble. It will answer for exhortation, but not for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; the thin liquid flow will do for babes, but it will not support the stomachs of men.—*J. M. Hoppin.*

With some ministers it must and should continue to form the staple method of preaching; for all men have not the mental facility, the linguistic gift, and the cool-headedness to become good memoriter or extempore preachers. The emotions of some men rise too suddenly, like agitated waves, to permit the calm process of making well-expressed and impromptu sentences.—*J. M. Hoppin.*

The reading of a discourse by the preacher need not prevent a suitable expression of his emotion, if he has made himself familiar both with his course of thought and his manuscript.—*F. W. Fisk.*

If, with the full manuscript before him, the preacher finds the people still as mice, and the old men leaning forward to drink in each word, then he needs no advice from Hall or Storrs, but he should go into his closet and bless his Father in heaven for empowering him to catch upon white paper the burning thoughts of a whole week, and to

read them to the people without a loss. As the written musical notes caught the dreamings of Mozart and Beethoven, and thus kept the best hours of their souls from escaping, so the manuscript of many a preacher catches all the lofty thoughts and feelings of a week, of morning, evening and midnight, and carries them without loss to the hungry multitude. There are souls whose thoughts come when they are in presence of the multitude; these become extemporaneous speakers. There are others whose brains begin to live the moment they strike a solitude; these are the writers. All they can do before the people is to read what the solitude said to their hearts. The difference between the two men is the difference between two roses or two blades of grass.—*David Swing.*

XIX.

EXTEMPORE.

Extemporaneous preaching, when adequate mental preparation has preceded, has great advantages over preaching from a manuscript. It is the mode which nature prompts. It immediately arrests attention, and excites interest, on the part of hearers. It secures to a skillful speaker a ready command of his audience. It will sometimes give a man of slender ideas and poor attainments, and even under disadvantages, a superiority to another man with whom, in regard to sterling qualities, he could not sustain a moment's comparison, but who has not the power of freely addressing an audience.—*H. J. Ripley.*

We are confident that extemporaneous preaching should engage, far more than it does, the labor and study of the clergy. The more we think of it, the more clearly shall we see that, as a species, it comes nearest to ideal perfec-

tion. It is a living utterance, out of a living heart and intellect, to living excited men, through no medium but the free air.—*W. G. Shedd.*

Pulpit discourses have insensibly dwindled from speaking to reading; a practice which of itself is sufficient to stifle every germ of eloquence. It is only by the fresh feelings of the heart that mankind can be very powerfully affected. What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation and fervor a week old; turning over whole pages of violent passions, written out in goodly text; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardor of his mind; and so affected at a preconcerted line and page that he is unable to proceed any farther?—*Sidney Smith.*

There is more natural warmth in the declamation, more earnestness in the address, greater animation in the manner, more of the lighting up of the soul in the countenance and whole mien, more freedom and meaning in the gesture; the eye speaks, and the fingers speak, and when the orator is so excited as to forget everything but the matter on which his mind and feelings are acting, the whole body is affected, and helps to propagate his emotions to the hearer.—*H. J. Ripley.*

When the clergy shall pursue theological studies as Melancthon says he did, for personal spiritual benefit; when theological science shall be wrought into the very soul, inducing a theological mood; when thorough learning, and diligent self-discipline, shall go hand-in-hand with deep love for God and souls; and when the clergy shall dare speak to the people, with extemporaneous boldness, out of a full heart, full head, and clear mind, we may expect, under the Divine blessing, to see some of those great movements which characterized the ages of extempore preaching,—the age of the Apostles, the age of the Reformers, the age of John Knox in Scotland, the age of

Wesley and Whitefield in England and America.—*W. G. Shedd.*

Perseverance is essential to ability. The purpose of becoming able thus to preach should not be defeated even by serious failures. Thomas Scott and Leigh Richmond, who both became good extemporaneous preachers, passed through some mortifications. So, too, did Robert Hall. Well worthy, also, of imitation in this particular, was the spirit of Sheridan. After an unsuccessful attempt to speak in the House of Commons, he replied to his friends who advised him to abandon the hope of serving his country in Parliament, "Never. I am sure it is in me, and it shall come out."—*H. J. Ripley.*

Don't give up the ship for one unfortunate fire. Why, I have suffered worse than Indian torture fifty times; but then I had Indian perseverance; and it is only by not flinching that we can gain the great end at last. You must expect, as a matter of course, sometimes to do ill. The state of mind, state of health, stomach, and bowels, nature of the dinner you have just eaten, etc. etc.,—all those unaccountably affect the power of the mind. And, then, sometimes, you will make too much preparation, that is, try to arrange words, and sometimes make too little, that is, arrange no thoughts, and in either case you will flounder. After beginning, it were wicked to be disheartened. *Up again, and take another*; that's the mode in which children learn to walk, and by which you must learn to talk.—*Henry Ware to his brother.*

In order to the best success, extemporaneous efforts should be made in an excited state of mind, when the thoughts are burning and glowing, and long to find vent. There are some topics which do not admit of this excitement. Such should be treated with the pen. When he would speak, he should choose topics on which his own mind is kindling with a feeling which he is earnest to com-

municate; and the higher the degree to which he has elevated his feelings, the more readily, happily, and powerfully will he pour forth whatever the occasion may demand.—*H. J. Ripley.*

I suppose a person who fills his mind with the subject he is to talk of; who speaks with great ease (for you would not have anybody attempt to speak in public without having proper talents for it); in short, a man who has attentively considered all the principles and parts of the subject he is to handle, and has a comprehensive view of them in all their extent; who has reduced his thoughts into a proper method, and prepared the strongest expressions to explain and enforce them in a sensible manner; who arranges all his arguments, and has a sufficient number of affecting figures; such a man certainly knows everything that he ought to say, and the order in which the whole should be placed. To succeed, therefore, in his delivery, he wants nothing but those common expressions that must make the bulk of his discourse.—*Fenelon.*

Ample thought breeds abundance of words.—*Cicero.*

You must not fumble over subjects, but grasp them; not glance at them, but resolve them.—*R. S. Storrs.*

The ability to preach well extemporaneously is far more common than is often supposed, and only needs to be cultivated.—*H. J. Ripley.*

Many suppose that there is a certain natural talent, essential to success, in extempore speaking, no less than in poetry; and that it is absurd to recommend the art to those who have not this peculiar talent, and vain for them to attempt its practice. In regard to that ready flow of words, which seems to be the natural gift of some men, it is of little consequence whether it be really such, or be owing to the education and habits of early life, and vain self-confidence. It is certain that diffidence and the want

of habit are great hindrances to fluency of speech; and it is equally certain, that this natural fluency is a very questionable advantage to him who would be an impressive speaker. It is quite observable that those who at first talk easiest, do not always talk best. Their very facility is a snare to them. It serves to keep them content; they make no effort to improve, and are likely to fall into slovenly habits of elocution. So that this unacquired fluency is so far from essential, that it is not even a benefit, and it may be an injury. It keeps from final eminence by the very greatness of its early promise. On the other hand, he who possesses originally no remarkable command of language, and whom an unfortunate bashfulness prevents from well using what he has, is obliged to subject himself to severe discipline, to submit to rules and tasks, to go through a tedious process of training; to acquire by much labor the needful sway over his thoughts and words, so that they shall come at his bidding, and not be driven away by his own diffidence, or the presence of other men. To do all this, is a long and disheartening labor. He is exposed to frequent mortifications, and must endure many grievous failures, before he attain that confidence which is indispensable to success. But then in this discipline, his powers, mental and moral, are strained up to the highest intenseness of action; after persevering practice, they become habitually subject to his control, and work with a precision, exactness, and energy, which can never be in the possession of him who has depended on his native, undisciplined gift.—*H. J. Ripley.*

No man who has thoughts, and is interested in them, is at a loss for words—not the most uneducated man; and the words he uses will be according to his education and general habits, not according to the labor of the moment. If he truly feel, and wish to communicate his feelings to those around him, the last thing that will fail will be language; the less he thinks of it and cares for it, the more

copiously and richly will it flow from him; and when he has forgotten everything but his desire to give vent to his emotions and do good, then will the unconscious torrent pour, as it does at no other season. This entire surrender to the spirit which stirs within, is indeed the real secret of all eloquence.—*H. J. Ripley.*

The degree in which after the most careful preparation for the pulpit, new thoughts, new arguments, animated addresses, often flow into my mind while speaking to a congregation, even on very common subjects, makes me feel as if I was quite another man than when poring over them in my study.—*Thomas Scott.*

The warmth which animates one while speaking gives birth to expressions and figures which he never could have prepared in his study.—*Fenelon.*

1. Write down the text on a loose piece of paper, and look at it. 2. Inquire, what does this text teach? What is my object? Obtain clear and definite views of the point. 3. Then commence thinking. Put down thoughts as they occur, without regard to order or language; get as much material as possible. 4. Then reduce these thoughts to order. This thought belongs under this head; that idea should come in there, etc. 5. Throw out all extraneous and foreign ideas.—*Dr. Griffin.*

Prepare clear definitions of things; collect strong proofs of every proposition; and provide ample materials for the illustration of the whole.—*J. Edmondson.*

When the preparation is faithful, the speaker feels at home; being under no anxiety respecting the ideas or the order of their succession, he has the more ready control of his person, his eye, and his hand, and the more fearlessly gives up his mind to its own action and casts himself upon the current. Uncasiness and constraint are the inevitable attendants of unfaithful preparation, and they are fatal to success.—*S. T. Sturtevant.*

In delivery, learn to know when to dwell on a point; let the enlargement be, not where you determined in your closet it should be, but where you feel the spring flowing as you speak — let it gush. Let contemplation have place while you speak.—*J. W. Alexander.*

Get the substance of your sermon, which you have prepared for the pulpit, so wrought into your head and heart, by review and meditation, that you may have it at command, and speak to your hearers with freedom; not as if you were reading or repeating your lesson to them, but as a man sent to teach and persuade them to faith and holiness.—*Dr. Isaac Watts.*

The speaker must have the discourse in his mind as one whole, whose various parts are distinctly perceived as other wholes connected with each other and contributing to a common end. There must be no uncertainty, when he rises to speak, as to what he is going to say; no mist or darkness over the land he is about to travel; but, conscious of his acquaintance with the ground, he must step forward confidently, not doubting that he shall find the passes of its mountains, and thread the intricacies of its forests, by the paths which he has already trodden. It is an imperfect and partial preparation in this respect, which so often renders the manner awkward and embarrassed, and the discourse obscure and perplexed. *Nemo potest de eâ re, quam non novit, non turpissime dicere.* But when the preparation is faithful, the speaker feels at home; being under no anxiety respecting the ideas or the order of their succession, he has the more ready control of his person, his eye, and his hand, and the more fearlessly gives up his mind to its own action, and casts himself upon the current. Uneasiness and constraint are the inevitable attendants of unfaithful preparation, and they are fatal to success.—*H. J. Ripley.*

Before going into the pulpit, the sermon, as a whole,—

that is, the separate thoughts in their relation to all the members, and to the whole,—should be clearly in the mind.—*Schleiermacher*.

It is in this that the majority of would-be extemporizers fail, because, for want of reflection and meditation, they know clearly neither the object of their discourse nor the way to treat it.—*M. Bautain*.

Some ministers are not willing to take the trouble of committing their skeletons to memory, but lay the paper before them, and speak on one point until that is exhausted, and then look up the next, which is treated in the same manner. This tends powerfully to impair the unity of the discourse, which should be unbroken, and to make each note the theme of a short, independent dissertation, rather than an integral part of the whole. The minister reaches a point where he does not know what is to come next, and on the brink of that gulf looks down on his notes, and after a search, perhaps finds what he wants. Had this latter thought existed in his mind, it would have been taken notice of in time, and the close of the preceding one bent into harmony with it.—*Wm. Pittenger*.

Nothing is so fatal to extemporization as this wretched faculty of the mind for losing itself in details, and neglecting the main point.—*M. Bautain*.

If you press me to say which is absolutely the best practice in regard to “notes” properly so called, that is, in distinction from a complete manuscript, I unhesitatingly say, use none. Carry no scrap of writing into the pulpit. Let your scheme, with all its branches, be written on your mental tablet.—*J. W. Alexander*.

Never stop to recall anything which you are vaguely and doubtfully conscious of having purposed to say, but which has somehow slipped from your thought. The pause is perilous; and you probably will not get back what

you miss. You have seen a boy, perhaps, pushing his arm between the pickets of a fence to get the round and rolling foot-ball which has fallen beyond it. He can just touch the ball with his fingers, but cannot grasp it; and the moment he presses it, off it rolls. So it is, often, with the thought which a speaker tries to recover, when he has passed it. It slips away again the instant you reach for it, and will not come back; while, in the effort to regain it, you have lost your hold upon the congregation.—*R. S. Storrs.*

It would not be too much to require of the student, that he should exercise himself every day once at least, if not oftener; and this on a variety of subjects, and in various ways, that he may attain a facility in every mode. It would be a pleasant interchange of employment to rise from the subject which occupies his thoughts, or from the book which he is reading, and repeat to himself the substance of what he has just perused, with such additions and variations, or criticisms, as may suggest themselves at the moment. There could hardly be a more useful exercise, even if there were no reference to this particular end. How many excellent chapters of valuable authors, how many fine views of important subjects, would be thus impressed upon his mind, and what rich treasures of thought and language would be thus laid up in store! And according as he should be engaged in a work of reasoning, or description, or exhortation, or narrative, he would be attaining the power of expressing himself readily in each of these various styles. By pursuing this course for two or three years, "a man may render himself such a master in this matter," says Burnet, "that he can never be surprised;" and he adds, that he never knew a man faithfully to pursue the plan of study he proposed without being successful at last.—*H. J. Ripley.*

If you write skeletons of sermons, let them be short; for you will remember twenty or thirty lines better than

a hundred. A long outline will confuse you; but a short one will render you essential service.—*J. Edmondson.*

I never wrote my sermons—not more than two or three in my life—and these not till after I had preached them. My plan has been to have a well-defined topic, and only such subdivisions as naturally arise out of the topic. I generally put them down separately on a small piece of paper, which I take into the pulpit, but scarcely ever use. This is commonly called a skeleton. I do not write out anything I propose to say, but carefully think over the main points, but never commit them to memory. I keep within living touch of my skeleton, but depend on the natural consecutiveness of thought to enable me to clothe it with muscle; and I depend on the inspiration of the occasion to give it life and color. The inspiration is partly human and partly divine; arising from the combined action of the divine and the human spirit, which combined action constitutes the power of a preached gospel.—*J. T. Durbin.*

I owe my success in life to one single fact, namely, that at the age of twenty-seven I commenced, and continued for years, the practice of daily reading and speaking upon the contents of some historical or scientific book. These off-hand efforts were made sometimes in a corn-field, at others in the forest, and not unfrequently in some distant barn, with the horse and the ox for my auditors. It is to this early practice of the great art of all arts, that I am indebted for the primary and leading impulses that stimulated me forward, and have shaped my entire subsequent history.—*Henry Clay.*

The first sermon which I preached, after my installation, was preached without notes. It was very nearly a dead failure. It was an absolute failure, so far as any sense of liberty on my part, or any useful effect on the people, was concerned. I have the notes of it still; and

not long ago, in looking over old papers, I happened upon these, and read them over. I saw at a glance what the secret of the failure had been. I had made too much preparation in detail; had written out heads, subdivisions, even some passages or paragraphs in full, in order that I might be certain beforehand to have material enough at command; and the result of it was that I was all the time looking backward, not forward, in preaching; trying to remember, not only prearranged trains of thought but particular forms of expression, instead of trusting to the impulse of the subject, and seeking to impress certain great and principal features of it on the congregation.—*R. S. Storrs.*

When I went to college it seemed to me that I should never be able to say a word in public without writing. But I soon determined that if I was going to be a preacher, and particularly if I wanted to be anything like a successful preacher, I must form the habit of extemporaneous address. So I went into my room, locked the door, placed the bible before me on a mantel, opened it at random, and then on whatever passage my eye chanced to rest, proceeded to deliver a discourse of ten minutes. This practice was kept up an entire twelve months. Every day, for a whole year, ten minutes were given to that kind of speaking, in my own room by myself. At first I found it very difficult to speak so long right to the point. But then if I couldn't talk on the subject I would talk about it,—making good remarks and moral reflections,—being careful to keep up the flow, and say something to the end of the term allotted for the exercise. At the end of twelve months, however, I found I could not only speak with a good degree of fluency, but that I could hold myself strictly to the subject in hand. You take this course. Don't do your practicing on an audience. That is outrageous.—*Newman Hall.*

I now write only a brief outline of the discourse, cov-

ering usually one or two sheets of common note-paper, and have no notes before me in the pulpit — not a line, or a catch-word.—*R. S. Storrs.*

In his studies and preparation for the pulpit, his plan was to fold a sheet of paper and lay it on his writing-desk, and then commence walking backward and forward across the room, occasionally stopping to note down a head or leading subdivision of his thoughts, leaving considerable space under each note. Having thus arranged the plan of his discourse, which he called blazing his path, borrowing a figure from backwoods life, he then proceeded to take up each head and subdivision separately, and amplify it in his mind, until he had thought his whole discourse through and through, stopping occasionally, as before, to jot down a word or thought, sometimes a sentence or an illustration, under each division, until he had finished. Then taking up the paper, he would usually con it over again and again, now blotting out, now adding something. Thus he continued until every part of the discourse was satisfactorily arranged in his mind. The notes thus prepared he usually took with him into the pulpit, but he rarely had occasion even to glance at them. He used to remark, I try to get the thoughts fully into my mind, and leave the language, generally, to the occasion.—*Quarterly Review on Dr. Blackburn's method.*

Nothing so thoroughly freezes the oratorical flow as to consult those wretched notes. Nothing is so inimical to the prestige of eloquence; it forthwith brings down to the common earth both the speaker and his audience. Try, then, when you have to speak, to carry all things in yourself, like Bias, the philosopher; and after having, to the best of your ability, conscientiously prepared, allow yourself, filled with your subject, to be borne along by the current of your ideas and the tide of words, and, above all, by the Spirit from on high, who enlightens

and inspires. He who cannot speak except with notes, knows not how to speak, and knows not even what speaking is.—*M. Bautain.*

It is very evident that extemporization can act only on the form of words,—the form of a discourse; for, in order to speak, it is necessary to have something to say, and that something must already be existing in the mind, or still more deeply in the intimate feeling of the orator.—*M. Bautain.*

It is evident that he who would extemporize a discourse must begin by feeling vividly the subject of which he has to speak, and that his expression will always be proportionate to the impression of it he will have received and retained.—*M. Bautain.*

Beware of introducing style into the arrangement of your plan; it ought to be like an artist's draught,—the sketch, which, by a few lines, unintelligible to everybody save him who has traced them, decides what is to enter into the composition of the picture, and each object's place, light and shadow, coloring and expression will come later.—*M. Bautain.*

If there is any secret in regard to speaking freely without notes which I have learned, it is simply this: that the recollective forces of the mind,—which are in their nature subordinate and auxiliary,—are to be kept strictly in abeyance—not to be called on for any service—so that the spontaneous, suggestive, creative powers may have continual and unhindered play. Nothing, if possible, should be left to be recalled at the time of speaking by a distinct act of memory. The more you try to recollect, the less effective your sermon will be; the more frequently you have to look backward in the course of it, the less aggressive, productive energy will remain in your mind; and it is this, if anything, which is to win and to move the assembly.—*R. S. Storrs.*

The first condition of speaking is to know what is intended to be said, and the greater the intelligence employed in the preparation of the speech, and the more clearly is it conceived, the greater the probability of presenting it well to others, or of speaking well. That which is well-conceived is clearly enunciated. Nevertheless, this first labor is not sufficient; it is easy enough in the silence of the closet, pen in hand, to elaborate a plan to be committed to paper and polished at leisure; but this plan must pass from the paper to the head, and be there established in divisions and subdivisions, according to the order of thoughts, both as a whole and in detail; which cannot be well done, and in a sure and lasting manner, unless the mind keeps the ideas linked by their intimate, and not by their superficial, relations.—*M. Bautain.*

When Cotton Mather was nineteen years of age, he received this excellent advice from his uncle, Nathaniel Mather, of Dublin: "By any means get to preach without any use of, or help by, your notes. When I was in New England no man that I remember used them except one, and he because of a special infirmity, the vertigo, as I take it, or some spice of it. Neither of your grandfathers (John Cotton and Richard Mather), used any, nor did your uncle (Samuel Mather) here (in Dublin), nor do I, though we both of us write generally the materials of our sermons." Increase Mather wrote his sermons, and committed them to memory. Cotton Mather, in preaching, always had his notes before him, but strove to be as little hampered by them as possible.—*W. F. Poole: The Mather Tapers.*

The speaker first comes under the eye of the audience, and should avoid either offending the taste or attracting attention by dress or manner. He is there to talk, and not to be looked at. Next he must be heard, and should give attention to voice; but the hearing is not the end—

he is not a singer, but a speaker—and hence must address the understanding. He should have not only a well-defined subject, but an object to accomplish. What does he propose to do? And then, what has he to say; what thought-value has his subject; what expressional and emotional power in its treatment? He should so get hold of his subject as to make it a part of himself; and then should connect himself and subject with the audience. If he have no object to accomplish, and no subject to present, he should not speak. If he fail to connect himself with his subject, or to connect himself and subject with the audience,—if he beat about in the air—his effort must be unsatisfying to himself, painful to the audience, and fruitless of any great result.—*H. W. Thomas.*

XX.

GESTURE.

Take care of anything awkward or affected in your gesture.—*John Wesley.*

Generally speaking, moderation is better than superfluity of gesticulation. Nothing is more wearisome to the audience than a violent delivery without respite.—*M. Bautain.*

There was a ridiculous actor in the city of Smyrna, who, pronouncing *O cœlum ! O heaven !* pointed with his finger toward the ground ; which when Polemo, the chiefest man in the place, saw, he could abide to stay no longer, but went from the company in a great chafe, saying : “ This fool hath made a solecism with his hand, he has spoken false Latin with his finger.”—*Thomas Playfere.*

Let him throw himself into his topic without taking

care for gesture, and the gesture will take care of itself. I would testify to you (I pray you note my testimony) that constraint, awkwardness, exaggeration in the rhetorical action usually proceed from one or both of these two causes—the embarrassment of the mind from the consciousness of deficient preparation and mastery of the subject, or the embarrassment of the self-love from overweening concern about one's own appearance. Let your heart be right ; let your preparation be perfect, and your previous social training will suggest the right gesture.—*R. L. Dabney.*

If I could once find a speaker in 'Change-Alley raising the price of stocks by the power of persuasive gestures, I should very zealously recommend the study of this art ; but having never seen any action by which language was much assisted, I have been hitherto inclined to doubt whether my countrymen are not blamed too hastily for their calm and motionless utterance.—*Dr. Johnson.*

I wish to utter my protest against going through the action of a discourse before a mirror. Those who practice it claim that it is legitimate the speaker should use this means to ascertain how his gesture will appear to his audience ; that he may in time correct what is awkward. The objection is that the audience is not there ; that, consequently, the speaker does not exactly realize the feelings of the actual orator in the presence of his hearers, and that his gestures will, therefore, be artificial and false. The moral effect of such preparation is, moreover, unhealthy. It fosters an unmanly attention to manner rather than matter, and I am persuaded that its tendency is to degrade the style of action.—*R. L. Dabney.*

Some speakers bawl on every occasion and bellow out everything with uplifted hand, as they call it, raging like madmen with incessant action, panting and swaggering, and with every kind of gesture and movement of the

head. To clap the hands together, to stamp the foot on the ground, to strike the thigh, the breast, and the forehead with the hand, makes a wonderful impression on an audience of the lower order, while the polished speaker, as he knows how to temper, to vary, and to arrange the several parts of his speech, so in delivery he knows how to adapt his action to every variety of complexion in what he utters ; and, if any rule appears to him deserving of constant attention, it would be that he should prefer always to be and to seem modest. But the other sort of speakers call that force which ought rather to be called violence.—*Quintilian*.

There can evidently be no real expression of emotion where there is no emotion to express. Action,—if such it can be called,—which is seen not to spring out of emotion in the preacher is not only forceless, but contemptible. If there can be an object of disgust in the pulpit, it is he whose intonations and gesticulations have no feeling behind them from which they spring. Action becomes a force only when it comes forth from the acting of the soul.—*F. W. Fisk*.

XXI.

LENGTH.

I know when to leave off—an art Protagoras did not know.—*Apelles*.

Too long often costs the speaker the credit he still deserves ; too short often gains him the credit he does not deserve. Hence it is safer to err by brevity than prolixity.—*Lisle*.

Most orators spoil their speeches by lengthiness, and prolixity is the principal disadvantage of extemporaneous speaking.—*M. Bautain*.

Limit a written sermon to half an hour, and one from notes to forty minutes.—*Cecil*.

When a discourse is too long, the end makes one forget the middle, and the middle puts out the beginning. Indifferent preachers are bearable if they are brief, but even good preachers become intolerable when they are lengthy. Depend upon it, there is no more detestable quality a preacher can possess than tediousness.—*Francis de Sales*.

Believe me, and I speak from experience, the more you say, the less will the hearers retain; the less you say, the more they will profit. By dint of burdening their memory, you will overwhelm it; just as a lamp is extinguished by feeding it with too much oil, and plants are choked by immoderate irrigation. When a sermon is too long, the end erases the middle from the memory, and the middle the beginning.—*Francis de Sales*.

Often when a preacher has driven a nail in a sure place, instead of clinching it, and securing well the advantage, he hammers away till he breaks the head off, or splits the board.—*Wm. Taylor*.

As a general rule, short sermons—short sermons. One subject, one thought, one duty, fully handed, fully illustrated, fully brought home to the conscience and heart, is enough for one sermon; and would that young ministers, as well as older ones, could have the sagacity, humility, and independence, to see and follow their rule!—*J. M. Hoppin*.

The proper length of a sermon is a point to be settled by the ability of the preacher. If he can make himself effective but for ten or twenty minutes, and then must begin to beat the air before a listless company of people, his time is up, and he had better come speedily to his "amen." But if his wand carries its potent spell twice or thrice as many minutes, then he is not too long if he

keeps on. Thus too long for one would be too short for another, because the one has outrun the sway of his gift and only persists to the injury of his cause; while the other has not yet filled the space in which he may do good. The outer limit of justifiable length is always this side the breaking of attention, and the lapse of the hearer into a state of dreamy patience, or utter somnolency, or painful uneasiness, that will render more words a waste of breath. By this test it is to be feared that Fenelon was not so far as he might have been from the truth when he said: "A hundred sermons are too long where one is too short." He seems not to have named the proportion of sermons which he regarded as of the right length.—*Lisle*.

A sermon should be like the city John saw in a vision. The people will find no fault with it, as a rule, if the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.—*Robert Collyer*.

Modern congregations are content with half the hour-glass measure; a good many, indeed would not object to the judicial dictum attributed to Baron Alderson, on being asked to give his opinion. "Twenty minutes—with a leaning to the side of mercy." And an American critic, who had certainly never heard of the English judge's verdict, came to a similar conclusion—"If a preacher can't strike ile in twenty minutes, he's either got on an uncommon bad location, or he's boring with the wrong tool."—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

XXII.

CONCLUSION.

The peroration, like the exordium, is required in order to avoid abruptness. As we should not begin abruptly, neither should we end in this manner.—*Vinet*.

The peroration should be energetic, captivating, fervent; not a fervor of the head or throat, but of the soul, accompanying something to enlighten the minds of the hearers, to gain the assent of their hearts, to subdue their passions, and to electrify their spirits.—*Abbé Mullois*.

His enthusiasm kindles as he advances, and when he arrives at his peroration it is in full blaze.—*Edmund Burke*.

To this part the highest powers of address should be reserved. Here, if ever, it is proper to open all the fountains of eloquence. Here, if we have succeeded in other parts, we may take possession of our hearers' minds. Having weathered the shallows and breakers, we may spread full sail; and according to the chief design of a peroration, we may give free scope to magnificence in sentiment and language.—*Quintilian*.

It must be a true conclusion; a vehement and powerful winding up and finishing. Hence, among the Ancients, the peroration received the utmost attention. The conclusions of the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero are constructed in the most elaborate manner, in order that there may be no falling off from the impression made by the preceding portions.—*W. G. Shedd*.

It is a great mistake to imagine a closing exhortation easier work than the previous management of the discourse. I know nothing which requires more intense

thought, more prudent consideration, or more judicious skill, both in ordering the topics and selecting the words. One may, indeed, very easily dash out into exclamations, and make loud appeals to his audience ; but to appeal pungently, weightily, effectually, in such words and emphasis, that the particular truth or duty shall be driven home and fastened in the mind and conscience — this is an arduous, delicate, anxious duty, which may well task a man's most serious and thoughtful hours of preparation.—*Dr. Ware.*

The accurate and rapid repetition of the arguments of a sermon, after they have been clearly and connectedly exhibited, makes a very strong impression upon the hearer. It is a summing up of the demonstration, a grouping and epitomizing of the entire logic of the discourse, which falls with massive, solid weight upon his understanding.—*W. G. Shedd.*

It is often proper at the end to make a recapitulation, which collects, in few words, all the orator's force, and brings into view the most persuasive things which he has said.—*Fenelon.*

There is a way of concluding which is the most simple, the most rational, and the least adopted. True, it gives little trouble and affords no room for pompous sentences, and that is why so many despise it, and do not even give it a thought. It consists merely of winding up by a rapid recapitulation of the whole discourse, presenting in sum what has been developed in the various parts, so as to enunciate only the leading ideas with their connection;—a process which gives the opportunity of a nervous and lively summary, foreshortening all that has been stated, and making the remembrance and profitable application of it easy.—*M. Bautain.*

The repetition and summing up of heads is intended both to refresh the memory of the hearer, to set the whole

cause at once before his view, and to enforce such arguments in a body as had produced an insufficient effect in detail. In this part of our speech, what we repeat ought to be repeated as briefly as possible, and we must, as is intimated by the Greek term, run over only the principal heads ; for if we dwell upon them, the result will be, not a recapitulation but a sort of second speech. What we may think necessary to recapitulate must be put forward with some emphasis, enlivened by suitable remarks, and varied with different figures, for nothing is more offensive than mere straightforward repetition, as if the speaker distrusted the hearer's memory.—*Quintilian*.

If pathos be requisite in a Christian discourse, it is undoubtedly in the peroration. There the orator ought to set in motion all the springs of sensibility, and to strike the greatest strokes of eloquence. All moral subjects tend to pathetic conclusions. The attention of the auditory, which always revives toward the close of the sermon, invites the Christian minister to finish instruction by moving and energetic representations, which may powerfully affect the conscience, and leave an indelible impression upon every mind—*Abbé Maury*.

A preacher who can come to a close when and how he pleases is able to preach the whole sermon with greater ease and freedom.—*Bengel*.

Never appear to be closing, and then start off again for another five minutes. When friends make up their minds that you are about to conclude, they cannot with a jerk proceed again in a devout spirit. I have known men tantalize us with the hope that they were drawing to a close, and then take a fresh lease two or three times ; this is most unwise and unpleasant.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

XXIII.

FISHING COMPLIMENTS.

After your sermon, court no expressions respecting it. If you are naturally sensitive as to its reception, conversation will only increase that sensitiveness. You have delivered your message. Leave it with the people and with God. If you make it the subject of conversation, people will think you wish compliments, and will fancy you care more for your reputation than for their souls.—*Bishop Simpson.*

However we may judge of our success, it is not wise to ask any of our hearers for their opinion. We may observe any indications of the effect produced, and, if the criticisms of others are offered spontaneously, it is not necessary to repulse them, especially if they are marked by a spirit of candor and good will ; but all seeking for commendation is debasing.—*Wm. Pittenger.*

Too many ministers, as soon as ever their discourses are pronounced, draw out a skillfully baited hook and begin to fish among the people for compliments. It is not criticism they angle for but flattery. It is not that they would learn if the sermon has done good to others, but that they would compass the more selfish aim of ascertaining that it has brought a little praise for themselves. But let the minister bethink himself how he may thus corner the people between their good will and their pity, on the one hand, and their integrity on the other, with the likelihood that he will make liars of them ; and also how he must inevitably thus compromise himself in their eyes. For they will see that he loves not the truth and the good of souls so well as he loves himself. They will accord to him the weakness of vanity. The part of true

manliness is to accept the praises that come unsought, and ask no more.—*Lisle.*

Let no speaker too much disquiet himself as to the effect he may have produced and the results of his discourse ; let him leave all this in the hands of God, whose organ he is, and let him beseech Him to make something accrue from it to His glory, if success has been achieved ; or if he has had the misfortune to fail, to make good out of this evil come, as it belongs to the Divine Power to do, and to that power alone. Above all, let him not canvass this person and that inquisitively concerning what their feelings were in hearing him, and their opinion of his discourse and his manner. All such questions seek a motive for self-love rather than any useful hints ; they are an indirect way of going in quest of praise and admiration, and may be carried to a very abject extent, in order to get oneself consideration, criticising one's own performance merely to elicit a contrary verdict—tricks and subterfuges of vanity, which begs its bread in the meanest quarters, and which, in its excessive craving for flattery, challenges applause and extorts eulogy. This wretched propensity is so inborn in human nature, since original sin, that frequently the greatest orators are not proof against this littleness, which abuses them in the eyes of God and man.—*M. Baintain.*

It is a point I long to know
Of it causes anxious thought
Do I love the Lord or ~~no~~
Am I his or am I not

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